

SHOCK CINEMA

NUMBER 3

\$3 (\$4 w/postage - \$5 overseas)

Your Guide to Cult Movies,
Arthouse Oddities,
Drive-In Swill, and
Underground Obscurities!



EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS: Yes, it's taken a little while to get my shit together, but welcome to the third edition of SHOCK CINEMA. A few things have changed, besides my city of residence. There's a little different look to the mag, thanks to an investment into the Computer Age, plus a hefty increase in the number of pages. But with it, the price has unfortunately taken a bit of a jump, with the cover price going from \$2 to \$3, and with mail order leaping to \$4 for the U.S., and to \$5 for overseas. Sorry about the increase, but I'm still not making money off this thing. Here's that mailing address: **SHOCK CINEMA, c/o STEVE PUCHALSKI, 309 5th AVENUE, BOX 446, BROOKLYN, NY 11215.** And remember, all checks and money orders must be made out in my name (NOT the bloody magazine), or else you won't be receiving nuthin'!

SUBSCRIPTION POLICY: As I've mentioned in my past two issues, SHOCK CINEMA still has no definite publication schedule. It all depends on how much free time I can find in between binges. Not to mention how much money I can scrape together to print out an issue. But I DO promise at least one edition of this putrid sleazy rag every year...Are you wondering about back issues of SHOCK CINEMA, and how to obtain them? Well, forget it! They're gone! You had your chance and you blew it, my friend! A few editions of my old newsletter SLIMETIME are still floating about in some mildewed box somewhere (issues #14-25), but even they're running low, and should be out of stock by the fall of '91 (in other words, if you want any, get 'em now, you slackers).

As usual, I'm willing to trade issues of SHOCK CINEMA with any other film 'zine editors. You show me yours—I'll show you mine. In some cases, your name might've fallen off my mailing list for various reasons (I wasn't sure if you were still publishing, I misplaced your address, you moved and I've been sending SC to an empty apartment, or I vomited all over my mailing list and didn't feel like scraping it clean). If so, get back in touch and I'll put you back into my files...And as I've said before, if you have any videos, films, audio tapes, mags, et cetera, you'd like to have dissected in the pages of SHOCK CINEMA, send 'em to me and I'll give 'em a look and a plug.

You might notice a couple of small changes in the content too, in comparison to the first two issues. First off, the FILM FLOTSAM section has shrunk. Personally, I like the idea of having an open forum for readers and other 'zine editors to ramble about their favorite overlooked movies, but if the response is just as pathetic for the 4th issue, I'm ditching the entire idea...There's also the usual mix of film reviews: Cult, horror, science fiction, et cetera. All the lost gems and should've-been-lost garbage you've come to expect from SHOCK CINEMA. But there's a little problem I've begun to encounter after five years of publishing: Running out of truly classic films. I look back at my past stack of newsletters, clippings, and articles, and realize I've already covered all the masterworks—unforgettable gems like HEAD, THE WIZARD OF GORE, SPIDER BABY, A BUCKET OF BLOOD, or BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS. Where exactly does that leave us? Well, for this edition I've focused more attention on underground productions and independent filmmakers, since they seem less preoccupied with bullshit...Call it SHOCK CINEMA, MACH 2---and we hope you enjoy our new direction.

What have I been doing instead of churning out SHOCK CINEMA, you wonder? Primarily, getting a taste of NYC., now that I'm a resident. Finding all [continued on inside back cover]

"I'D RATHER DIE FIGHTING THAN DIE GETTING FAT."

Dennis Hopper

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A MAN TO LOOK UP TO—that's what every girl wants. And if he is talented, artistic and a nice guy, he'll get the kind of look starlet Lili Kardell is giving Dennis Hopper. Dennis portrays the young Napoleon in Warners' "The Story of Mankind," and appears in Warners' TV series for ABC, "Sugarfoot." He'll star in C. V. Whitney's "The Young Land."

FILM FLOTSAM

A Forum for Cinematic Obscurities

CHRIS DOHERTY; PENSHIPS PRESS.

WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN? A terrific adaptation of Robert Stone's novel *DOG SOLDIERS* with a dynamite script by Stone. This is a movie about the American experience in Vietnam that was made back when people could remember what a shitful, messy waste it was. The Creedence Clearwater Revival score is trippily appropriate and Stone writes wonderful dialogue, like "When elephants are pursued by flying men, people are just naturally going to want to get high."

SORCEROR. Far and away William Friedkin's best film, *SORCEROR* is a gritty visceral success even if it is a remake of a more intellectual Clouzot film. It was originally released the same weekend as *STAR WARS* and was crushed at the box office. One fifteen minute scene where four men drive two nitroglycerine laden trucks across a crumbling rope bridge in the pouring rain simply must be seen.

THEY ALL LAUGHED. OK, this is a light-hearted romantic comedy and I admit that it's hard to get into the mood if you sit down knowing that one of the players carried on with the director during shooting and as a result was savagely beaten, raped, and killed by her boyfriend. But if you can get beyond that, it's really a terrific movie. Honest. I'd tell you more about it but I'm too depressed now.

ALL NIGHT LONG. The only good film with Barbra Streisand in it, this little seen gem was directed by Jean-Claude Tramont, who has a fascinating outsider's take on American corporate/consumer culture and the sort of crazed individualism that opposes it. Gene Hackman stars as Harry Duppler ("Dup-ler, like UP."), a corporate upper-middle manager who flips out one day, throws his boss's chair right through the gray-glass window wall (a wonderful opening shot, from outside the building) and gets demoted to night manager of an all-night drugstore. This cynical mid-life crisis comedy was far too sophisticated for American tastes, but the quirky script, keenly directed performances and first rate cast make it a big smile.

HOME MOVIES. What can I say, this is a stooooopid movie...but I love it. It was made at a film class at Sarah Lawrence under the direction of Brian DePalma and stars Nancy Allen and Kirk Douglas with Vincent Gardenia as the Eskimo-molesting father. Featuring the "Star Therapy" method of rehabilitating voyeurs and the very first use (in American cinema) of a French Fry Cam, this sophomoric comedy was more than an excuse for DePalma to film his wife in her underwear. It was an excuse for DePalma to film his wife doing a live sex act with a rabbit.

THE KILLER ELITE. Robert Duvall and James Caan star as partners in a mercenary/intelligence company that provides protection to sensitive foreign nationals whom the government doesn't want to admit any knowledge of. Terrific acting, a really scary taxi cab and a mothballed Destroyer full of crazed Ninja assassins combine with a plot full of complex double crosses to make a first rate, intelligent, action movie. This film is just full of wonderful bits of business, those neat little moments that stick with you, like a dumb motorcycle cop and his new bomb, a garbage truck two days early and a cop in the wrong shoes. Trust me, after you see it, you'll understand.

ANTHONY PERTICARO.

SECONDS (1964). John Frankenheimer's best film. A wonderful, lucid tale about a dull, middle-aged man who wants a new life. He is blackmailed by a group of underground surgeons to take part in a full body plastic surgery outfit and becomes Rock Hudson. Now, he becomes tired of his new life and wants to go back...but there is a catch. Marvelous sci-fi thriller that is on my top ten favorites. Not on video; you have to view it on late night TV.

THE PLAGUE DOGS (1981). This follow up to *WATERSHIP DOWN* is the most stunning animated film I have ever seen. Sadly, this was a massive flop when released. The tale involves the lives of two dogs who escape from a vivisection lab, but only to be hunted by the government because they may be carrying the plague. A fantastic allegory about the Holocaust and humanity's inability to cope with primeval instincts, this is the best of the serious cartoons of the late '70s/early '80s.

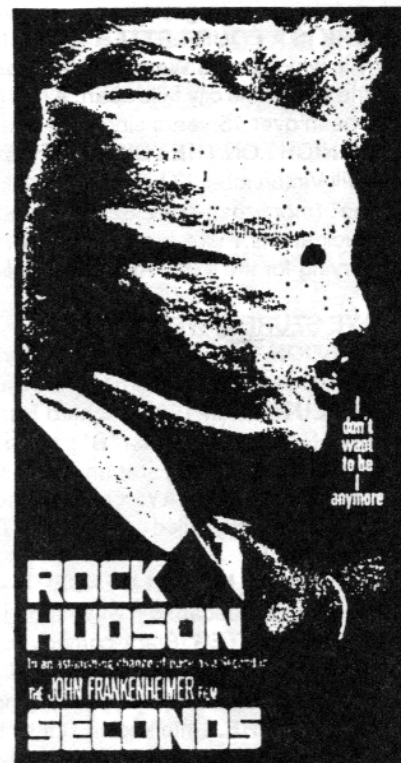
THE BIG SHAVE (1967). A weird one, gang! A 16mm short about a bearded man's early morning shave. Not happy at all after ridding himself of his beard, he lathers up again and proceeds to cut his own throat and rip the skin off his face! Then, after looking at his horribly mutilated countenance, he smiles and walks away! [Ed. note: This was also one of Martin Scorsese's first short films.]

THE UNDYING MONSTER (1942). Made the same year as *THE WOLFMAN*, this is one of the greatest werewolf movies ever made, but nearly forgotten about because of the popularity of the aforementioned classic. Relying more on mystery, suspense and plot than monster on the rampage scenarios, this is one of the best ever.

ULTRA Q: THE MOVIE (1964). This film dealt with aliens invading earth and it spawned a TV series of the same name. The spinoff to it was *ULTRAMAN*.

THE FLYING GUILLOTINE (1980). This kung fu classic concerning a martial artist and his twirling decapitation device is the goriest chopsocky film ever. LOADS of gore and meat fly as everybody is losing their heads left and right!

THE MARCA DEL HOMBRE LOBO (1967). Poor Paul Naschy never truly got the respect he deserved. Everybody gives *FRANKENSTEIN'S BLOODY TERROR* a bad review, but they never mention Al Adamson and Sam Sherman cut 45 minutes out of it when I.I. released it. The uncut European version is one film I've been looking for, for six years! It restores all gore, character development, and missing scenes.



TRISTER KEANE: TRISTER KEANE'S MAGAZINE.

HOMESDALE (1971). Before going onto great feature films like *PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK* and studio swill like *GREEN CARD*, Peter Weir made this featurette about an "experiment in togetherness", the Homesdale Hunting Lodge. Run by several white-coated attendants, it's part campground, part insane asylum, and part Fantasy Island. Crude and sinisterly humorous, plus that damned hiking song still runs through my head: "Homesdale, Homesdale. We are the Boys of Homesdale..."

BLACK AND WHITE LIKE DAY AND NIGHT (1981). The most thrilling film ever made about the game of chess! (I guess that doesn't say much, eh?) Bruno Ganz stars as an international chess champion who goes WAY over the edge of sanity during world competition. As perfect a portrait of psychological breakdown as *TAXI DRIVER* (though without the cathartic violence), and once again proving Bruno Ganz is one of the great actors of this era.

PRETTY POISON (1968). A film packed with thrills, dark humor, and the confirmation that Tuesday Weld was one of the coolest, sexiest young actresses in the biz. Tony Perkins stars as yet another mental mess and Tuesday is a high schooler who catches his eye. But when the time comes, guess who has the real stomach for violence and cheap thrills? A wicked look at the underbelly of Apple Pie America, and (for its own era) on par with *HEATHERS*.

THE CRAZY FAMILY (1986). One of my favorite Japanese films of all time. Directed by Sogo Ishii, it's a sadistic satire of that culture's middle class, focusing on the seemingly-sane Kobayashi Family. They seem to have everything—a successful Dad, a loving Mom, and two happy teenage kids, plus they've just moved into the suburban house of their dreams. But just wait until their "sickness" takes over, sending our Nuclear Unit spiralling into comic obsessions, until they're literally battling each other with mothballed World War II weapons and a chainsaw. It begins like *FATHER KNOWS BEST*, turns into *THE SHINING*, and ends up like a crazed Looney Tunes cartoon. Stunning camerawork and an insane sense of humor make this a must-see.

RADIO ON (1979). This introspective little road movie should've opened an entire new era of British cinema. So where'd it disappear to? And what happened to director Christopher Petit, whose later films never made it to America? On the outside, the plot involves a gent's cross country trek and investigation into his brother's death. On the inside, it's a portrait of cultural dislocation. Influenced heavily by Wim Wenders' early work, punctuated with fine music (Bowie, Kraftwerk, Devo) and briefly featuring Gordon Sumner as a gas station attendant.

THE DAY THE CLOWN CRIED. No, I haven't actually seen this legendary lost movie. Has anybody? Jerry Lewis stars as a circus clown who works a World War II prison camp, keeping the Jewish children amused, all the way into the ovens. Man, if this movie is anywhere as pathetic as Jer's telethons, it's got to be an unintentional laugh riot of bad taste, bad acting and badly-dyed hair.

WORK IS A FOUR-LETTER WORD (1968). An English anti-establishment, anti-automation comedy in which David Warner grows giant psychedelic mushrooms, and everyone blissfully trips out at the end as the city falls apart. A real grab-bag, and definitely a unique product of its era...Strange. It's been over 15 years since I've seen it, but that image of king-size fungi still hangs with me.

ONE NIGHT ON THE TOWN. The most brain-damaged animated short ever made. Period. Similar to Will Vinton after 23 hits of black acid! A clay-animated vision of life in the gutter, featuring a little "man" (more-than-coincidentally modelled on Edvard Munch's *The Scream*) and his barroom hallucinations. Puke, blood, heroin, whores, and metamorphosing images so joltingly diabolical and unrelenting it sent most of the audience scurrying for the exits. As for me? Heck, it's just like NYC!

**DAVE SZUREK; WEIRD CITY.**

AND SOON THE DARKNESS. Robert Fuest's last cheapie before making a name for himself with *ABOMINABLE DOCTOR PHIBES*. Often taut suspense thriller starring Pamela Franklin as the apple of a thrill killer's eye.

ABSOLUTION. In 1981, Richard Burton finally got a good role, but it wasn't seen in America until 1988, when it was incomprehensibly distributed as just another "B" picture and sold to video before anyone knew it was around. Psychological chiller by Anthony Shaffer also starred British singing star (in a non-singing role) Billy Connolly.

POW-WOW HIGHWAY. "On the Road" serio-comedy with soap star A. Martinez and Gary Farmer as Indians who leave the reservation to spring an unjustly jailed confederate. Deserves more attention. Music by Robbie Robertson and John Fogarty. Is this supposed to be a new *EASY RIDER*?

THOU SHALT NOT KILL EXCEPT—. Delightful satire of sleaze movies, with Sam Raimi as a Charles Manson sort. Then again, maybe I'm prejudiced because it was made in Detroit?

THE CARPENTER. Black comedy from Canada with Wings Hauser as the ghost of a serial killer. Generates both laughs and chills.

GAME OF SURVIVAL a.k.a. TENEMENT. A Roberta Findlay film on this list? You'd better believe it! Seems she lucked out with suspenseful tale of kill-crazy crackheads menacing slum dwellers. Made with obvious pocket change, it's outstanding for its budget.

BORN OF FIRE. Little known British thriller set in modern Turkey. Evil djinn provides the menace and script calls for some knowledge of theology and mysticism, which is maybe why it failed at drive-ins?

CURSE OF THE DEVIL'S MOON. Extremely obscure, no-budget but well-made 1980 urban update of *CURSE OF THE DEMON*. From Canada, this one is absent from most reference books.

THE HIT. No, not the Billy Dee Williams blaxploitation epic. English black comedy with John Hurt as hired gun after suicidal informer Terence Stamp. Clever.

NORTHVILLE CEMETARY MASSACRE. From William Dear before he went mainstream with *HARRY AND THE HENDERSONS*, no-budget Detroit-made bike epic. One of the best of the sub-genre.

BRAINSTORM. No, not the better-known Douglas Trumbull film. William Conrad's low-budget movies were generally pretty weak, but this 1965 parade of "faded stars" was a significant exception. Jeffrey Hunter feigns insanity—or is it the "real thing" in order to get away with the murder of evil psychiatrist Dana Andrews—or is this all part of Hunter's imagination? Involving.

BEAST OF MOROCCO. Nightmarish British film from '68 about pair of Moroccan vampires exploiting British tourist's neurosis to seduce him into their lifestyle. Sometimes surreal.

BLOODY WEDNESDAY. Starts poor, but gradually climbs into something worth seeing. Character study of mental case. Psychologically ghoulish.

THE SAVAGE ANGELS. An oddity. A bike epic in 1984—and from Canada, yet! Supposedly set in the Midwest, funny to hear French-Canadian accents.

SPENCER HICKMAN; PSYCHOTIC REACTION.

RAW FORCE (1981). This is a fuckin' wild movie! How can you go wrong with a movie that contains Zombies, Kung Fu, Cannibals, Monks, Gore, Sex, Drug Smuggling, Blood, Nudity, a Hitler Look-alike, Attack by Piranha Fish, Slapstick Comedy, and Cameron Mitchell? Well, let's face it, you can't. A must see. I reckon the entire cast and crew must've been on another planet while making this! Crazy.

NAKED WEREWOLF (1977). Yet another sloppy Italian rip-off. Daniella, who is the title character, is one fucked up lady—she dreams about lizards raping her and fucks and kills her sister's husband! She ends up in a hospital next to a crazy nymphomaniac who rapes her, then escapes the hospital and watches a young couple makin' out, gets raped and falls in love with some guy who lets her stay at his place. Everything is hunky dory 'til some guy breaks into the house, rapes her (what again?!), kills her fella, and leaves. She gets her revenge by killing 'em one by one, and the cops find her dancing in a circle of fire. Sick, Sleazy and downright awful. A must see!

CRYBABY (1990). Any fucker that tells you Waters has sold out must have his head so far up his ass he's been eating shit for years! Great Juvenile Delinquent tale has Johnny Depp starring, also with (get this great cast) Traci Lords, Ricki Lake, Susan Tyrell, Iggy Pop, and cameos by Willem Dafoe, Troy Donahue, Mink Stole, and Joe Dallesandro as a bible basher! An absolute classic Waters movie and he's still got the touch—just check out some of the dialogue and set pieces, such as Iggy picking up some brat by the ears during a fight and an absolutely gross french kissing scene that has to be seen to be believed. Traci takes her pout to the extreme as Wanda, and the film is wonderful. "Let's all put on a folk hat and learn something about a foreign culture," says it all, don't it?

More recommendations: BUCKET OF BLOOD, FACELESS, HOTSPUR, KILLER NUN, THE LOVELESS, NOTHING UNDERNEATH, BREEDERS, STRIPPED TO KILL, and BLACK MAGIC II.

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(THE GHOUL IN SCHOOL)



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THE DEVIL'S COMMANDMENT

GINA MARIA CANALE and DARIO MICHAELIS



GHIDRAH THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER



BILLY THE KID vs. DRACULA

COLOR



JESSE JAMES MEETS FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER

COLOR



1,000 EYES OF DR. MABUSE

THE RETURN OF DR. MABUSE



UNKNOWN WORLD

ATOMIC RULERS OF THE WORLD (59)
EVIL BRAIN FROM OUTER SPACE (59)
INVADERS FROM SPACE (59)
ATTACK FROM SPACE (59)
ATTACK OF THE MUSHROOM PEOPLE (63)
MAJIN MONSTER OF TERROR (66)
THE MAGIC SERPENT (66)
PRINCE OF SPACE (59)
INVASION OF THE NEPTUNE MEN (59)
WARNING FROM SPACE (56)
DAGORA THE SPACE MONSTER (64)
BEYOND THE TIME BARRIER (60)
THE BRAIN THAT WOULDN'T DIE (59)
BEAST OF YUCCA FLATS (61)
I BURY THE LIVING (58)
THE LAST MAN ON EARTH (60)

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SALAZAR ROBLES



THE GIANT GILA MONSTER (59)

THE KILLER SHREWS (59)
ATTACK OF THE GIANT LEECHES (59)
ZONTAR THE THING FROM VENUS (67)
THE ASTOUNDING SHE MONSTER (57)



CANDY (1968). This extravagant, scattershot satire is an utterly unique product of the counterculture '60s, as funnelled through the studio system and a bunch of obviously-dosed filmmakers. It's a trippy, yet often frustratingly naive string of vignettes, and the best (if not only) way to approach this mystical throwback is to put aside the 'story' and just enjoy the slumming starpower on display—one of the most eclectic casts to grace any motion picture that decade. There's a pile of solid credits behind the camera too. Based on Terry Southern's novel and scripted by Buck Henry, with photography by Giuseppe Rotunno (Fellini's *SATYRICON*), a title song by The Byrds and special effects by Douglas Trumbull which kick off this miasma and introduce us to Candy Christian (Ewa Aulin), a doe-eyed schoolgirl on a comic adventure into her own sexuality. Sounds risqué? Not as much as it could've been, considering the taboo-shattering time period. Candy is thoroughly innocent and though Ewa is certainly beautiful, her acting consists of confused gazes at her libido-driven co-stars or bouncing about in micro-skirts. And when she tells a Fellini-esque director "But I don't know anything about acting," you certainly believe her...Her first encounter is with Richard Burton, who reaches deep into the recesses of his acting well-spring to play a lecherous Welsh alcoholic (ooh, there's a stretch for the guy!). As a pretentious poet named MacPhisto, Burton is hilariously pompous with an ever-present wind machine dramatically blowing his hair and scarf, and it's the only time you'll see an actor of his caliber blubbering on the floor, face-down in a puddle of whiskey (though this might've been a favorite pastime by the time he was staggering through crap like *THE KLANSMAN*). Ringo Starr then pops in, brilliantly type-cast as a Mexican gardener with the worst accent since the Frito Bandito. He's followed by Walter Matthau as a gung ho army chief (reminiscent of Southern's Jack D. Ripper from *DR. STRANGELOVE*). Let's not forget James Coburn as an eccentric brain surgeon, John Huston as the hospital administrator and John Astin as twin brothers (Candy's dad and uncle). By the time she finds herself having sex with a hunchbacked thief while inside a grand piano as pillow feathers fill the air—well—it's become downright unfathomable. Director Christian Marquand comes up with some far out and groovy images, but he's utterly lost at the same time (hence his spectacular non-ending). Then again, how can you not guiltily enjoy any film sporting the image of Marlon Brando as a nutball Indian guru living in a moving tractor trailer? With flowing locks and a wardrobe swiped from Gandhi's closet, Marlon tosses Method Acting to the wind—mugging for the camera as he teaches Candy spiritual values (merely as an excuse to play *Hide the Salami* with her). And if the point wasn't already pounded into our skulls like a railroad spike, here it is: Everyone is out for Themselves! (A valid point, but not a very original one)...This indulgent all-star muddle oozes with curiosity value, and I think *CANDY* is more welcome today than when first released, simply because it's more of an anathema than ever to modern, brainwave-flattened filmgoers. Down-deep it's a mess, but a wonderfully indulgent mess, and I love it. —Steve Puchalski

GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE (1990). The Big Green Guy is back! And it's about fucking time, if you ask me! It's been six years since the last installment in the City-Stomping series, and I began to fear *GODZILLA 1985* would be its swan song. This new addition hasn't yet (officially) made it to U.S. shores, so I grabbed a Japanese copy for the occasion—letter-boxed, sans subtitles, and without any dick-witted American studio interference (which caused the '85 flick to get chopped by almost half an hour, and inserted the tepid Raymond Burr fottage, er, footage). Directed by Kazuki Omori, and with effects by Koichi Kawakita (a student of the grand old master, Eiji Tsuburaya), this is probably the slickest Godzilla film of 'em all. But it's also pretty script-heavy—wrongheadedly relying on human subplots which only slows down the Giant Monster Mayhem we all know and love...It begins with a pack of scientists at the American Genetic Corporation, who're dabbling with The Unknown (Uh oh! That always spells trouble!). They're concocted an anti-nuclear bacteria, and mixed together with plant cells, human cells, and Godzilla cells, the result is a mutant plant monster which gets loose when industrial terrorists attack the lab. These naughty terrorists also explode Mt. Mihara, only to wake up the napping Godzilla, and set him stumbling across the countryside like he's had too much saki and needs to find the mens' room. So there we have our two opponents: Everyone's favorite fire-breathing leviathan versus a giant plant with an attitude (and since this plant-thing happens to look exactly like a giant rose, it doesn't really cut it in the Menacing Department at first). The flick also takes its time getting to any rubber-monster rampaging. First we have to wade through a straight-faced subplot about a grieving scientist and his dead daughter (sob sob); a psychic chick who can sense Godzilla; and lotsa laughs at the sight of The Godzilla Memorial Cocktail Lounge (honest!) and a whacked cameo by Demon Kogure of the rock 'n' roll group



Sekimagumi. The action finally kicks in when the government sends out the modified Super X (remember that flying Aurora kit from GODZILLA 1985?), to stop Godzilla with a Firemirror which reflects his atomic bad breath back at him. Of course, it works about as well as most Japanese cheapjack products do, so it's no real threat. But it's not until Godzilla takes on Biollante that the film moves into third gear and takes on some good weird twists. You see, though Biollante may not look like much, it tends to mutate when hit by atomic energy. So Godzilla soon has to fend off fanged tendrils, electroshock, and spewings of gloppy green acid. And the four-star finale has Godzilla battling one of the biggest, ugliest Toho creations ever. But it was over all too quickly for my tastes, and the story even takes a sudden tailspin into sentimental bathos. Blah! You'd almost think that the filmmakers are more interested in the human aspects of the script than the mindless destruction! Happily, The Big G goes wandering back into the ocean at the end, thus promising another adventure. Soon, I hope... The tale's a bit longwinded (as you can see) and it idiotically tries to upgrade its appeal by sporting a more serious tone, when all we really want is wall-to-wall action and cool special effects. The end product is a mixed bag—some absolutely spectacular set pieces, sprinkled with hackneyed drama (which at least gives you time to grab a fresh Tsing Tao from the fridge). The miniatures are still from the Lego School of Cost-Cutting and all the water battles look like they were filmed in the Toho wadding pool, but both monster suits are very cool (Oh, you mean you never realized those were costumes? Sorry...)...Not the best of the series, but far from the worst. Sure, I'm griping a lot, but don't get the wrong idea—I still loved seeing Godzilla stomping the terra once again. If you're a monster movie fan, don't miss it! —Steve Puchalski

ANGEL UNCHAINED (1970). You got it, smart guy! It's another AIP addition to the biker phenomenon they first brought to scuzzy life with THE WILD ANGELS, DEVIL'S ANGELS, et al. And though this one came at the end of their run, it's definitely a neat twist on that quickly-aging drive-in genre...Don Stroud, who's made a career out of playing modern-day neanderthals, stars as Angel, a biker who feels "strung

HANG LOOSE, WHEN YOU MAKE THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE RUN

Down a gauntlet of violence
In a war of survival against
the Cycle Freaks and
the Dune Buggy
Straights!



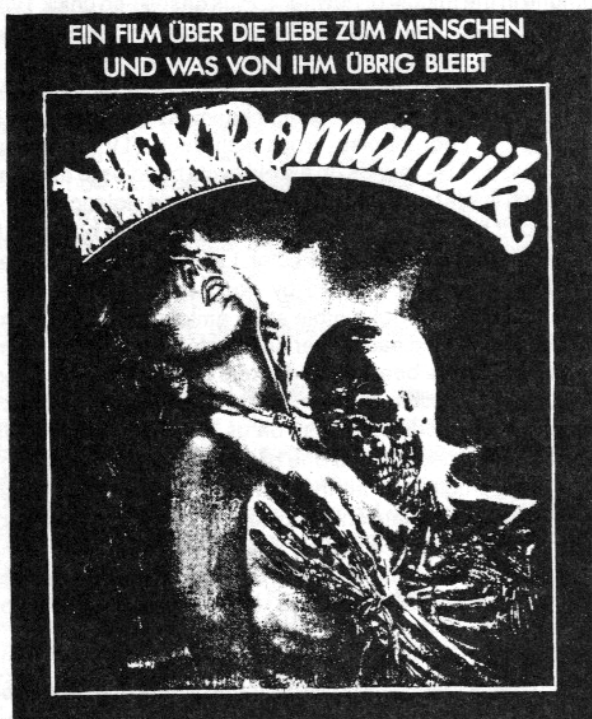
out" from his gang (The Nomads) and hits the road alone, in the hope of finding himself. Instead, he just finds a struggling hippie commune in the middle of nowhere. Plus dashiki-ed chick Tyne Daly (who even then looked like she was on the verge of plumping out), who quickly becomes his self-righteous main squeeze. But peace 'n' love are hard to come by when the neighboring townspeople are rednecks whose favorite hobby is tearing up the poor hippies' crops with their ATV's. So what does Stroud do? He rounds up his old cycle buddies to even the odds, which leads to loads of groovy humor and violence, as the Nomads butt heads with the longhair's lifestyle and bust heads with the rural roughnecks. Director Læe Madden serves up some decent swill punctuated by good action sequences—beginning with a colorful rumble at an amusement park (complete with pummeling each other on the merry-go-round) to the fine finale, when the beer-bloated bikers take on the peabrains. And though the middle drags a little with all the non-violence rhetoric, it never goes comatose on us, thanks to some wildly scripted characters, such as one biker with a magician's cape packed with drugs, and an indian medicine man who bakes hallucinogenic chocolate chip cookies. There's also great sup-

port from the cast. Stroud—certainly no prettyboy—is a solid presence, with a glimmer of intelligence behind that heavy brow and thinning hairline; plus there's Bill McKinney slobbering through the slimeball role of Shotgun, and the late Aldo Ray, in a useless role as the useless sheriff...Action, comedy and loads of liquored-up louts on choppers. This flick covers all the essential bases, and it's a cool exploitation mutation. —Steve Puchalski

THE MANIPULATOR a.k.a. B.J. LANG PRESENTS (1971). Here's a lost curio from the acid-inspired days of indie filmmaking. A tripped out vision of insanity featuring a tour de farce performance by Mickey Rooney. It's also an amazing achievement, which quickly destroys any preconceptions you might walk in with...Almost the entire film is set in a warehouse chocked with hallucinatory backdrops, old movie props, scrap sculptures, and cobwebs. And Rooney (who's in nearly every scene) stars as B.J. Lang, a crazed old man who believes he's the greatest director of all time in the midst of planning his next epic—while in actuality he's just a deluded has-been stumbling through an abandoned building. Looking particularly haggard and sporting a scraggly beard, Rooney gives a brave, over-the-top performance consisting of stream of consciousness monologues and acting that transcends the boundaries of camp. It's one of the ultimate psycho performances of all time, and Rooney's jolly persona only adds a more deranged touch to the brew, especially when we discover B.J. isn't just a menace to himself. You see, he's keeping a young woman (Luana Anders) captive in his warehouse, and keeps referring to her as "Carlotta", his personal starlet. Tied to a wheelchair and pleading for food ("I'm hungry, Mr. Lang," she begs repeatedly, until he finally spoons her some baby food), Rooney torments Carlotta and forces her to act out scenes for his "camera"; while Mickey dances, screams, emotes, practices death scenes, wears rouge and lipstick, and spends the second half of the flick with a fake Cyrano nose...Essentially, it's a two-character work (except for a five-minute stumble-thru by Keenan Wynn as a wino)—a theatre piece that's been adrenalized by wild editing, hyperkinetic photography, strobelights, freeze frames, and every imaginable camera trick in the book. Directed by first-timer Yabo Yablonsky (whose only other credit was co-scripting John Huston's soccer flick VICTORY), and with labyrinthine art direction & set decoration by Larry Cohen, it's a slim concept (SUNSET BOULEVARD meets THE COLLECTOR) mutated into a hallucinogenic, comic nightmare in which the fantasy world of filmmaking takes its toll and reality takes a backseat to illusion. Foremost there's Rooney, who (hard to believe) is unforgettable—whether he's playing a broken, pathetic man reminiscing about the past, or chasing Luana past sides of beef (?) with a rapier. And after 90 minutes of its dizzying pace, you feel like you're on the verge of madness too. Overbearing, pretentious and brilliant, this is one film that bares repeated viewing. —Steve Puchalski

SHUT UP AND SUFFER (1991; B Movies Inc., 45 Crosby Street, NYC 10012). Is this just another collection of East Village video indulgence? Not on your life! This trio of shorts stands above the pack both conceptually and technically, once again proving Beth B. is one of New York's premiere independent directors. The first work, *BELLADONNA* (1989), filmed with Ida Applebroog, is quite simply one of the most remarkable shorts I've stumbled across in months. A 15 minute piece which meshes film and video images into a hypnotic melange. A series of actors are featured, each speaking directly into the camera lenses, but only fragments of their words are ever heard. Snippets of their dialogue is juxtaposed with others, and repeated endlessly, to incredible effect. The technique is similar to Anthony Balch's early cut-up featurettes, but in this case, it also resonates with a powerful emotional impact. The images they speak of are particularly vivid—such as rabbits hanging in a butcher shop; lies, love and monsters; or a small child pleading that he's not a bad person. It's difficult to describe its wonderfully elliptical construction, or the mixture of personal feelings as the performers' words begin to take form into a patchwork quilt of turmoil and pain. It's a brilliant achievement. So much so that the next short, *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE* (1985-1991) seems like just a throwaway. Clocking in at just under two minutes, it's a step back to the home-made underground miasma. An assault in video format, slapping together images of religion, Nazi gear, penises, and fishnetted thighs. Blunt, quick and with nothing new to say, though a couple of the fleeting compositions are nicely grim. And for a finale we have *THANATOPSIS* (1991), which was written by and stars Lydia Lunch, and is without a doubt the most effective conduit for her verbal venom. Instead of pounding the viewer in the face with a rock, Beth B. simply films Lydia in her apartment, doing everyday things like washing her face or making coffee. While as a counterpoint, Lydia narrates her disgust at war mongering, cultural tunnelvision and U.S. bullshit. The film is beautifully conceived, with a haunting quality which gives weight to her words...Definitely recommended, *SHUT UP AND SUFFER* is one of the best video collections of the year. —Steve Puchalski

NEKROMANTIK (1989). Next we come to Jorg Buttgerit's notorious little ditty embracing the eroticism of death, which certainly has a de served reputation. It's an ode to man's darker obsessions which, though lyrical and lovingly-made, is completely ill of mind. A primitive



work that evokes a myriad of reactions—revulsion, curiosity and possibly even amusement, with some sequences having the flavor of a bloodthirsty Luis Bunuel in its exploration into the absurdity of human existence. Jorg seems to go out of his way to offend his viewer's sensibilities, and isn't afraid to kick right off with a disturbing on-screen auto accident aftermath in which a woman has been cut in half. Here we first meet Rob, an employee of Joe's Streetcleaning Agency, which is responsible for body-bagging roadkill remains. Well, Rob's the type of guy who likes to take his work home with him and he has a secret collection of eyeballs and organs pickled in formaldehyde (he must've been a riot during Show 'N' Tell when he was a kid). He's turned on by the notion of death and decomposition, as is his live-in girlfriend Betty, so when Rob lugs home an entire rotting corpse one night, they're in ecstasy. They both get off on rubbing its wormy flesh and they even go so far as to take it to bed and have sex with it...OK, I know what you're thinking right about now. Yes, the director is one sick fuck, but his film never offended me the way many splatterfests can. Sure, it's not exactly family entertainment, but Buttgerit's charting some twisted themes here, and any gore is approached in an almost lackadaisical fashion. What emerges foremost is the relationship between two people linked by their necrophilic needs. And when Betty walks out on Rob when his fresh corpse supply dries up, we follow his trek into madness and the self-awareness that he's addicted to ever-escalating sexual excitement. Because after experiencing so much, everything else seems jejune. Its ultra-realism is beyond anything being served up on U.S. screens today, and it wades through every manner of depravity to arrive at its razor-edged conclusion. Daktari Lorenz is alternately pathetic and sympathetic as Rob, and as Betty, Beatrice M. is a powerful sexual presence. You might not 'enjoy' this film, but there's an urgency in its fetishistic delights (and it's a little creepy to think how much I liked this

movie, thinking about it afterward). Despite some low-budget crudeness, I found it hypnotic. An incredible, indelible achievement that breaks new boundaries in the horror that lies within...In German, with tiny, difficult-to-read subtitles. (Excellent quality copies are available through Pat Hollis, LIVING COLOR PRODUCTIONS, 12 Pleasantview Ln., Circle Pines, MN. 55014. \$30 plus \$3 for shipping.) —Steve Puchalski

MICKEY ONE (1965). "I couldn't be funny even if my life depended on it. And it *did*." And thus begins Arthur Penn's brilliant, surreal *MICKEY ONE*. Made in Chicago in 1964, it's a totally unique blend of stark back-alley visions (over a decade before Lynch's even wackier workout *ERASERHEAD*), wiseass humor, existential paranoia, and bohemian style (perfectly captured in the amazing Eddie Sauter/Stam Getz jazz score). Warren Beatty stars as a high-living nightclub entertainer ("a Polack Noel Coward") with decadent habits and dangerous friends (Warren, of course, researched *extensively* for the role). When the mob pulls the plug on his cash flow, all his high-priced favors are now big time debts payable *yesterday*. Stressed out and getting booed off the stage, he decides to hit the road. In a stunning montage, "Mickey One" emerges as Beatty sheds his identity and hops a "freight to hell", which leads him to a massive scrapyard on the South Side where Beatty sees a vision of his death, "crushed out" in a wrecked car. He also sees the alternative, in the guise of an Oriental artist, looking for junk and pulling a horse and wagon. Mickey gets a scary stuttering sermon at the soup kitchen ("Is there any w-w-word from the I-I-ord?"). After some exciting odd jobs ("You're Mickey One! Garbage!"), he gets a sleazy agent and hits skid row strip joints as the "management's answer to the cold shower". Mickey's fortunes turn around again(?) as a posh nightclub owner (a great seedy turn by Hurd Hatfield) scouts the club and offers Mickey a slot opening at his club. Paranoia reigns as Mickey first resists, then finally endures a frightening (and very funny) "audition" for menacing club owners ("Boy, if I'm unlucky, I've got the greatest finish in show business"). Mickey finally decides to find out

who "owns" him, hitting nightclubs and bars for a name and a place. A few sleazy dives and fistfights later, Mickey drives back to the scrapyard. Staring into the "crushout", Mickey gets his head straight and gets a horse-and-wagon lift back to town from our friendly artist. He goes on for his first show, aware that the "powers that be" are watching his every move. In a very cool (and surreal) epilogue, Mickey confronts his fears, accepts his fate, and does his act. Certainly one of the overlooked minor masterpieces of the '60s, it benefits from Penn's cool European-style direction and Aram (END OF THE ROAD) Avakian's innovative cutting. Beatty's performance ranks as one of his best (he's always good when playing anti-hero paranoid types, a la THE PARALLAX VIEW), and the supporting cast is also excellent, including the beautiful Alexandra Stewart (whose career gravitated to Europe after this), Fujiwara, and Franchot Tone. Since MICKEY ONE hasn't been released by bone-headed video distributors yet, if you catch it on TV, slap a blank in the VCR and dig it, baby! —Tavis Riker

DRIVE, HE SAID (1972). Jack Nicholson got a lot of attention for directing THE TWO JAKES (a watchable, if emotionally-void dick flick), before the film went belly up financially. 12 years earlier, Jack had tried his hand behind the camera with GOIN' SOUTH, and didn't impress audiences either. But let's return to Nicholson's directorial debut, which also didn't make Dime One, but not for the fact it isn't one hell of an impressive work. The notion of Jack directing (though not appearing in) a film about college rebellion in the early '70s brings to mind a combo of PSYCH-OUT and THE TRIP. Nope. Because it never goes for standard stereotypes, druggy kicks or easy answers. And Columbia Pictures

must've been dumbstruck by this art-heavy item, when all they'd wanted was EASY RIDER PART 2...The star of the film is William Tepper (Yeah, I know...Who?) playing Hector, an Ohio college basketball star who finds himself face-to-face with that era's emotional and social upheaval in the form of his cynical, possibly-crazy, long-haired roommate Gabriel (Michael Margotta), who's vying for the title of Resident Campus Revolutionary by staging guerilla theatre or dodging the draft by attempting to puke in the psychiatrist's face. Also on hand is Karen Black as a prof's wife, who having an affair with Tepper (and Karen actually gets to act, instead of just showing off her bad perms). And Bruce Dern is absolutely brilliant in a different role for those of us who admire him for THE WILD ANGELS, THE INCREDIBLE TWO-HEADED TRANSPLANT, or shooting The Duke in the back in THE COWBOYS—as the hard-assed basketball coach. Not to mention filmmakers-to-be Robert Towne and Henry Jaglom, who show up in the front of the camera as college professors...The script goes off into several different directions, giving us a slice of life without resorting to the heavy-handed preaching that weighed down other campus revolution-fests like THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT and GETTING STRAIGHT, as we observe Tepper's evolution of rebellion. From antagonism with Dern on the court and deteriorating emotional

relationships, to a simple awareness of the growing cultural malaise. And Nicholson uses the events to illustrate America's need to win, the loss of freedom, and an overwhelming sense of chaos. Sounds high fallutin', you say? Sorta, and the dialogue sometimes lapses into pretentiousness. It would also help if one of the leads was truly sympathetic, but both Tepper and Margotta are charisma-barren...Looser and freer than his later directorial work, Nicholson meshes visual bravado with an ultra-realistic edge. Sometimes boring, sometimes riveting, the film captures both the idealism and naivete of the period. As well as being one of the few sports-oriented films that didn't make me want to kick in my picture tube out of sheer annoyance. Sure, the camera dwells on the beauty of the game (proving how big a B-ball fanatic Jack was, even back then), but it's all for a good cause. The film is often brilliant and thought-provoking, if a little inconsistent, and it's a solid piece of social cinema. —Steve Puchalski

SORORITY GIRL (1957) and THE COOL AND THE CRAZY (1958). If only there were more theatres like Film Forum in the Village. Recently relocated to Houston Street, don't let the slightly Yupified air (carrot cake and espresso at the refreshment stand) turn you off, because they consistently churn out the best programming around, from filmmaker retrospectives, foreign imports, and obscurities no one else would touch. Who else would be cool enough to do a month-long tribute to Samuel Arkoff, and give us a chance to see all those great no-budget AIP gems from the '50s on a screen (where they belong)? Everything from BUCKET OF BLOOD to TEENAGE CAVE MAN was showcased on double-or-triple bills, but my pick for Best of Show is this J.D. double bill, chock full of overripe emotions and laugh riot teen lingo...SORORITY GIRL, Roger Corman's startling expose behind the walls of a "typical" sorority, kicks it off with wonderful credit illos and a wagonload of cheap pathos. Susan Cabot (THE WASP WOMAN) stars as 30-year-old co-ed Sabra, a rich bitch Sister whose favorite pastimes are abuse and degradation. The rest of the sorority is a mixed bag of neuroses—one gal is running for college prez, but has a secret lurking in her past; one girl is secretly pregnant; another pledge is just fat and depressed—and Sabra demeans all of these stereotypes, amidst heavy doses of unintentional comedy. These are college kids only interested in "beer and kicks" as Dick Miller, the cool cat manager of the local hangout explains. And Miller gets to play it tough, as a "love 'em and leave 'em" type of rebel, with Sabra trying her best to steal him away from another gal. This is efficient work from Corman, who was working with a budget so low that a restaurant scene looks like it was lensed in someone's living room (all they could afford was one table and no extras). You gotta love that kitschy '50s furniture though, and I'd kill to know where I could buy those pineapple-shaped lamps...On the other hand, THE COOL AND THE CRAZY is a true trash classic—a fast-paced, four-star expose on dope addiction and juvenile delinquency. Director William Witney and scriptwriter Richard C. Sarafian (who'd go on to direct VANISHING POINT) give us an ultra-dramatic tale of restless, useless youth, all heightened by realistic Kansas City locales. And you know right off the bat you're watching AIP fare, because all the high schoolers look about 25 years old, and some are so old they're actually losing their hair. But the real life locations and the snappy script are its backbone, for where SORORITY GIRL looks and sounds thoroughly fake, this one has a gritty streetwise flavor. Scott Marlowe stars as Ben, the new "teenaged" hood in town—



a reform school grad with a pocketful of marijuana which he plans on peddling to the other kids. After assimilating into the local gang of yokels who like to hang out at Pat's Pig diner, Ben quickly hooks them on "M", and then moves 'em onto the harder stuff. These thrill-seeking stupes take their first puff of grass, immediately begin talking to Bus Stop signs, and turn into addicts after just one joint. It's fucking hilarious, and prepare to bust a gut when withdrawal sets in the very next morning, when all the J.D.'s need MORE! "I've gotta crawl back into the woodwork," pleads one guy, while he pounds his head on a tabletop. "My guts are falling out!" Pretty soon they're carrying guns into school, stealing to maintain their habit, and becoming unwilling pawns of those evil dope dealers. There's a semi-annoying anti-drug attitude throughout (then again, what do you expect for the '50s?), but it's all lashed together with a hip script, tense performances and surprisingly tough edges. Co-starring Dick Bakalyan (and his weird nose) as the class clown, this is one of the all-time teen angst epics! —Steve Puchalski

DRACULA VS. FRANKENSTEIN (1971). Back when I was a kid, Famous Monsters magazine made this flick out to be the greatest piece of celluloid since **LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD**. I guess that explains how Forrest J. Ackerman got the job as technical consultant (not to mention a bit part in which he's hugged to death by Frankenstein's monster). A little cash pressed into the right palm can do wonders...Instead, it's just another hackjob by schlockmeister Al Adamson—the only filmmaker who could've shat out such anti-epics as **BLOOD OF GHASTLY HORROR** and **HORROR OF THE BLOOD MONSTERS** (or for that matter, would've wanted to). His films certainly aren't Oscar winners, but at least they always provided plenty of unintentional laughs. And this is one of Al's most elaborate productions (which still isn't saying much). It's a grab bag of genres, tossed together like a rancid salad—mixing hippies, bikers and monsters, not to mention a Count Dracula who acts like an effeminate hairdresser on thorazine (as portrayed by the gouted, quickly-forgotten Zandor Vorkov). Regina Carroll stars as a pneumatic nightclub performer (note that I didn't use the term "singer") who's searching for her missing sis. The trail leads to a nearby carnival and a Creature Emporium run by halfpint Angelo Rossitto, which also happens to be the seedy home base of the decrepit Doc Frankenstein (wheelchair bound J. Carrol Naish), who's still in the reanimation biz. Teaming up with Dracula, the Doc brings his family's original monster back to life, and it looks more like The Elephant Man with a pituitary overload. Meanwhile Lon Chaney Jr. stumbles about like he's having a stroke as the overweight manservant Groton, and the always-spaced Russ Tamblyn blows in as a biker/drug pusher named Rico (who doses Regina's coffee)...Of course, the title is a bit deceptive since Drac and Frankenstein are on the same side—that is, until the very end, when Regina's busty charms turn the monsters against each other, and the Count rips the arms off of his patchwork pal. The rest of the demises are wonderful too (almost the entire cast perishes in some ridiculous fashion—like falling onto an axe blade), but don't expect much gore with a GP rating. And Adamson's stunning attempt at originality is having the characters spout slang like "bummer" and "that's my bag". So there you have it: Stupid, incompetent and often downright boring. In other words, typical Al Adamson fare. You can smell this flick from blocks away. And it ain't pleasant, lemme tell you. —Steve Puchalski



BEYOND THE DOORS a.k.a. DOWN ON US (1984). I located this piece of crap in a Syracuse video store in the section labelled "Documentaries". HA! That's the best joke I've seen all year!...Director Larry Buchanan has never been known for his meticulous crafting or originality, and the guy's ground out more lemons than General Motors. His early monster-muddles were even cheaper remakes of earlier B-movies: **ZONTAR, THE THING FROM VENUS** was a rip-off of **IT CONQUERED THE WORLD** and his **THE EYE CREATURES** had the nerve to use the plot of **INVASION OF THE SAUCER MEN**. But they weren't just normal Bad Movies. They were incomprehensibly rotten! Almost surrealistically abysmal in the way they don't even attempt to follow basic human logic. This particular project of his belongs in Buchanan's Rip-Off-The-Dead career niche, along with **GOODBYE, NORMA JEAN**, his Marilyn Monroe expose. A film that isn't afraid to wring in a few bucks by stomping on the graves of not one, but three cold-as-a-mackerel celebs. So if your sensibilities can endure the ordeal of Buchanan's wretched tabloid-style filmmaking, here's what "really happened" to Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison, because this movie promises to blow the lid off the secret behind their deaths. Are you sitting down? No, they didn't overdose—the U.S. government actually assassinated them! Honest! It was all a carefully constructed plot to "neutralize the three Pied Pipers of rock music." If only the film itself was constructed as carefully...It's a painfully idiotic concept, and Buchanan's casting only complicates matters. As Janis Joplin, Riba Meryl comes off more like Stevie Nicks with PMS. Gregory Allen Chatman's Jimi Hendrix can barely hold a guitar, much less wail on it. Worst of all, Jim Morrison (Bryan Wolf) looks like a scrawny Peter Frampton, and when he opens his mouth, it's nerve-racking. I might've had a few small problems with Val Kilmer's interpretation of Jim in **THE DOORS**, but at least he didn't turn him into a complete clown, clutching a tambourine on stage and telling them "I'll flash my cock if you burn your draft card". And since the producers obviously couldn't get the rights in order to butcher any of the three's original tunes, they wrote new songs that aren't even close to the real thing. And mock-Morrison's poetry is something that has to be heard to be believed. This "chilling" expose explains that all three were getting on the government's nerves—Jimi was being courted by black revolutionaries, Morrison talked back about the Vietnam War, and Janis even found her political self—so they sent a trench-coated agent to off 'em and make it look like drug-related demises. So in between scenes of Jimi snivelling about being unloved or Morrison mumbling his inanities, Buchanan keeps cutting back to official gov't types plotting their schemes. This isn't left-wing propaganda, just left-over!...Hilarious (at first) for its sheer unbelievability, but Buchanan still can't keep our attention, and his worst sin is to make all of these legends into complete bores! Accountants have more natural charisma (or at least I've heard rumors they do)! And wait until you have to suffer through the pathetic scenes of each star dying, after being slipped death-inducing drugs. And in Janis' case, the

assassin punches a bunch of extra needle tracks in her arm after she's DOA, just to make it look good. Quite tasteful, Mr. Buchanan, you shithead! He even tries to convince us that maybe Morrison didn't die after all, and just entered a monastery. AAAAAAarrggghhhhhnnh!!!! I can't take it any more! This unimaginably inept mess had my mind reeling, and the scariest part is knowing that there are probably morons out there who'd watch this drivel and actually believe it. —Steve Puchalski

THE CHARLES BUKOWSKI TAPES (1983). Years before director Barbet Schroeder filmed Charles Bukowski's script for *BARFLY* (one of the great films of the '80s), he left us an earlier legacy in the form of this four-hour glimpse into Bukowski's wit, wisdom and wine consumption. Yes, I said **FOUR FULL HOURS** of one man talking into a camera! Seems excessive, you say? Not when he's one of America's most talented, no-bullshit writers—pulling acidic humor and streetwise honesty out of his lifetime of liquor. The portrait is broken into 52 numbered passages, ranging anywhere from 2 to 10 minutes each, and most of it was filmed in his living room or from a lawn chair in his backyard. With weathered features and a nose like an irradiated pickle, Bukowski smokes incessantly and has a drink virtually stapled to his hand (usually a Heineken or Becks). Sure, he might seem to some like an old geezer shooting his mouth off—and I guess he is, come to think of it—but his words have a beauty and grubby lyricism that cuts to the bone marrow. He's truly the master of barroom tales, tinged in despair, lost love and dipsomania. In addition to reading his verse, Chuck details his history of short-term jobs and how he escaped the 8 hour grind; the type of people who disgust him (i.e. apathetics and Christians); the joys of appearing on talk shows (he compares it to "swallowing your own vomit"); the heavenly dream of a perfect bar; and his overall opinion of mankind ("The more I think of humanity, the less I want to think of them."). The man's definitely opinionated and proud of it—whether he's putting down marijuana use, nearly beating up his girlfriend on-camera, or brushing off his Guru status amongst the younger generation. And though moments might piss you off or seem pretentious, Bukowski is without a doubt a uniquely gnarled voice. Listen closely, for his words touch a nerve in our rebellious nature, and he understands the writer's desperate need to spew confusion and emotion onto a page in hope of making some sense of it all...Schroeder keeps behind-the-camera technique to a minimum, allowing Bukowski's comical yet honest vignettes to hold our attention. It's a Portrait of the Artist as a Old Drunk, not to mention an incredible, one-of-a-kind document. And if you're like me, you'll find it impossible to get through in one sitting, though not because it didn't hold my interest. You see, if you're popping beers as quickly as Bukowski, you'll pass out, surrounded by your own empties, long before the tapes are over. And that's probably just as he would've wanted it. —Steve Puchalski

FINGERS (1977). James Toback is not one of your most renowned directors, by a long shot. Projects such as *EXPOSED*, *LOVE AND MONEY* and *THE PICK-UP ARTIST* each had moments of greatness (and are ultimately worth checking out), but his first film is still his best. It's a Martin Scorsese wannabee that succeeds on its own occasionally goofy merits, by taking a completely convoluted storyline and jacking it up with wonderful urban lowlifes, arthouse flashiness, and moments of unflinching brutality. At the center is Harvey Keitel, who shines in a surprisingly mannered performance (a la Christopher Walken) as a concert-level pianist who spends his free time as a debt collector for *The Mob* (hey, I told you it was goofy). Keitel wants to break away from his criminal life in favor of Carnegie Hall recitals (you can tell the guy has an artistic nature, because he wears a paisley scarf), but his two-bit goomba dad keeps pulling him back, with Art and Violence thrashing it out for ultimate control. But Toback would never be satisfied with such a straight-forward storyline, so he piles on twists of incongruous humor and no-bullshit violence, which keeps the viewer continually off-guard. And only Toback would conceive of putting the joys of a prostrate exam on film for posterity. The film's greatest success lies in its unique characterizations. The people on the screen may not always be likable (always a big drawback commercially), but they're powerfully etched. Keitel gets to run the full gamut—from hilariously blasting "Summertime" on his ghetto box in the middle of a swanky restaurant, to sweet talking a sobbing bag lady, to initiating some of the nastiest bloodshed since *TAXI DRIVER*. Then there's co-star Jim Brown, everyone's favorite badass from *THREE THE HARD WAY*, *CRACKHOUSE*, et cetera. Toback and Brown had worked together in the past and big Jim was given one of his juiciest roles ever by his pal—that of a playboy/ex-jock/womanizer (not exactly an acting stretch, eh?). It's only a ten minute part, but Brown's wonderfully slimy as a smooth talking bon vivant who'll suddenly crack two women's skulls together, just for the fun of it. Talk about a collision of fact and fiction!...Which brings me to the only drawback of the film—it's seriously misogynistic edge. The handful of female roles are both passive and thoroughly abused, in particular Tisa Farrow (*ZOMBIE*) as Harry's spineless squeeze and Tanya Roberts (in one of her first screen appearances) as a bimbo who gets raped by Keitel in the ladies' room...Though a thoroughly disjointed concoction—veering between the visceral and the surprisingly introspective—it definitely grabs you by the balls. —Steve Puchalski



FINGERS

NO SUCH THING AS GRAVITY (1990; Atomique Film International, 110-2071st Road, Forest Hills, NY 11375; \$25). Alyce Wittenstein's latest effort is a dazzling science fiction tale with a thoroughly subversive edge—sort of George Orwell meets Flash Gordon. It's also one of the most entertaining new releases to emerge from the miasma of local underground filmmaking, with Ms. Wittenstein once again taking jabs at government repression and corporate swinedom in the guise of kitschy science fiction...The story is set in the all-too-close future, with the world run by LaFont Industries, which distributes dehumanizing technology (such as auto-dressers and robot-teachers) in order to brainwash the population and cover up the hellish condition the planet is in. And if anyone speaks out, they're swiftly relocated to Nova Terra, an artificial world they're created for undesirables. Nick Zedd stars as rebellious lawyer Adam Malkonin, who's sick of the totalitarian run-around, and quickly finds himself too an outcast. One visit to Nova Terra solidifies his rebellious nature, when he discovers it's a virtual paradise (not to mention being in color)...As science fiction goes, it's pretty basic stuff. But I admire how Alyce uses the near-campy plot to vent her

spleen against oil companies, political propaganda, greed, repression, and governments in general. None of it's subtle, but it's all heartfelt and quite welcome. In addition, this is also one of the most accomplished independent features of this ilk. Wittenstein utilizes some great locales (such as the old '64 World's Fair), loads the frame with cool sets and props, and captures many striking (not to mention disorienting) b&w visuals, right down to the animated titles and hallucinatory sequeways. She even manages to bring out the best in Zedd's limited acting ability—as the cynical hero he keeps that stereotyped sneer plastered on his face, but it works beautifully within the context of the story. And though it might be difficult to believe, you almost like the guy. The rest of the cast is fine too, in particular the lovely Emmanuelle Chaulet and her metal brassiere, with some familiar faces (Taylor Mead, Michael J. Anderson and Alyce herself) popping up for quick appearances...Some might complain it's all a little naive, but hell, I think it's kind of refreshing to see a film where the good guys win against The System—because we all know how often that happens in the real world. Kudos to Alyce W. for giving us a cinematic feast of both style and substance. —Steve Puchalski

DEADBEAT AT DAWN (1988). Remember the name Jim Van Bebber. Because he's one sick fuck with a movie camera—not to mention, a crudely-talented one. And this feature debut is a mix of grime and brutality that'll take days for you to scrub away. There's not one redeeming social element in the entire flick, and that's what helps make it a fave. Plus it's packed with so much kinetically choreographed action it makes Walter Hill look like a sissy. It starts off fast, and then escalates to absurd levels...The lead character is Goose (played by director/writer Van Bebber), the scraggly-haired leader of a street gang named The Ravens. Under pressure from his girlfriend, Goose decides to quit his gang and set up house, but when he's out selling Crank to some pushers to raise cash, his girl is beaten into slop with golf clubs by his ex-gang pals. And Goose is so distressed he dumps her corpse into a trash compactor and swears revenge. Holy heartache! But that's only the beginning of his bad day! Later on, Goose pummels his junkie Dad, after pop goes after him with a butcher knife; the spectre of his lost love begins traipsing through the graveyard in her funeral sheet; and Goose has to slaughter the entire supporting cast. These people don't just die—they splatter! And obviously Van Bebber has a love for flicks like THE GORE GORE GIRLS. But wait, there's more! Add kaleidoscopic seques, hallucinations, supernatural bullshit, Rush snorting, and a ten-minute-long finale of kickass carnage!...Behind the camera, Van Bebber captures the grubbiness of the streets, from burnt out tenements to fridges stocked with Milwaukee's Best (shudder!). And he's just as effective in front of it, looking the way I feel after a long night at The Grass Roots. Crude, disturbing and relentless, I've had hangovers that've been more entertaining, but never as exciting...The trailer for Van Bebber's next project looks even more diseased, believe it or not. **CHARLIE'S FAMILY** is a sex, drugs and mayhem-packed dramatization of the Manson shenanigans, and promises to be the most realistic (and therefore tasteless) glimpse into their kooky commune...But just so you don't get the idea Van Bebber is only into gore-drenched depravity, I also caught the first half (damn it, the videotape ran out!) of his short documentary entitled **DOPER**—a portrait of an average working class shmoe who happens to be a closet druggie. Van Bebber brilliantly intercuts straight talk from the guy (during which he rambles on about how he's always high), with interviews of the Normal Folks he works with by day (who tell us what a great fellow and hard worker he is). It's a neat little idea, well executed, and when Van Bebber's next feature bashes its way into town, I'll be first in line. —Steve Puchalski

WE ARE NOT TO BLAME



WE ARE NOT TO BLAME (1990; Cassandra Stark, P.O. Box 1793, NYC, NY 10009).

This video is so crudely made it's almost pathetic, but under the surface ineptitude there's a sympathetic strangeness I really enjoyed. Though on the surface it seems like just another home-made East Village concoction in the style of Kern et al, it's without the mean-spirited "fuck you all" trendiness that can get so annoying. And there's even the semblance of a story, with director Cassandra Stark not only wallowing in low-rent Alphabet Ave atmosphere, but adding a feminist edge to the proceedings to give depth to the characters and provide several fiendishly funny sequences...Meet Paula and Denise, two young women doing their best to track down no-experience jobs and survive their own terrifying spaghetti dinners, and Stark captures their frustrated lifestyle in all its shaky-cam glory. Richard Kern and Nick Zedd also co-star, both playing asshole men who blithely smack women around—with Kern receiving his hilarious comeuppance when the gals tie him up and leave him on their rooftop to die. These are characters as burnt out as the surrounding buildings. As fucked up as the city they live in. With two leads (well played by Aura Mae Jessen and Cassandra herself) who are more-than-slightly-warped yet always-likable, fighting back against outside forces. And to be honest, I found that only half-an-hour with these two women wasn't nearly enough...Technically, the sound is muddy, the editing is choppy, and the photography is almost as unfocused as the script. But despite it all, by the conclusion Ms. Stark captures several startling and disturbing images, plus moments of deceptive beauty. Despite it's roughness, this is a very cool video, and I hope Cassandra keeps pumping them out regularly. —Steve Puchalski

An Afternoon on 42nd Street with EVE OF DESTRUCTION and PREDATOR 2.

Taking a stroll down West 42nd Street certainly can be depressing nowadays, especially for filmgoers who have fond memories of the grand old days (only a few years ago, actually) when every two-bit, sleazy exploitation flick would play somewhere on that one

block area, between Broadway and 8th Avenue. Nowadays there are only a handful of those grand, glorious and altogether grimy theatres still in existence. And how can you not chuckle at the Selwyn's marquee, which proudly announces "Bring the Family"? Sure, most people (especially tourists) probably wouldn't mind having the entire block of porno theatres, adult boutiques and armor-plated beer stores swept right into the river, along with all the spaced-out dope dealers and panhandlers. But what would that leave us with? A street like any other in the city, and where's the fun in that? Hell, I had a good laugh when I saw that one of the old shuttered theatres had recently been reopened, and was attempting to do a stage version of ROMEO AND JULIET. As I passed by the entrance, you could see all these clean-cut, white

theatre-goers staring apprehensively out on 42nd Street, while three feet away, Stinky the Bum was taking a whiz on their building...Where else but on 42nd Street can moviegoers check out two (possibly three) first run features for only six bucks, while the same flicks are playing two blocks up the street for \$7.50 apiece? What other theatres will turn a blind eye while you lug in a six pack, or leave you alone while you're passing a quick joint down the row? And where else can the audience mouth off at the screen without pissing anyone off (my favorite comment occurred at the end of a coming attraction, when the caption "Coming for Christmas" flashed on the screen. "Shit! I could be DEAD by Christmas!" one brother in the balcony yelled.)? Certainly not at Cinefux Odeon...Unfortunately, even low-brow distributors (such as Concorde) are deserting this sinking ship, deciding to avoid their usual Deuce one-week "theatrical" engagements and go straight to video (or even worse, Brooklyn) in many cases. But you make do, and this afternoon a friend and I decided to check out a matinee duo of *EVE OF DESTRUCTION* and *PREDATOR 2* at the Selwyn, equipped with the perfect breakfast—several packages of peanut butter *Funny Bones* and a bagful of beer. Before grabbing our seats I took the opportunity to use the mens' room, which smelt like a wino's small intestine, and after a few of these experiences you learn to just hold your breath for the duration of your stay, or risk spewing up your breakfast into the urinal. Mustard gas had nothing on this stench. But I happily left that experience behind me as we grabbed our seats up front. It was a packed house, and we were fortunate to find two seats together that didn't look too badly chewed by the rats. The management had brought the lights up in between features (many of the theatres run continuously, so you won't have chance to examine your mildewed surroundings), and you can imagine how palatial the space had once been. Not like the matchbox google-plexes that dot the landscape nowadays. And when we look up at the ceiling we can see the sun gleaming through the numerous holes in the roof. It gave the place sort of a planetarium feel, while making us glad we didn't come on a rainy day...Oh yeah, then there were the films. Almost forgot about 'em, which wouldn't be a huge loss, come to think of it. You see, *EVE OF DESTRUCTION* is total junk. Even Orion Pictures seemed slightly embarrassed by the thing—the best their P.R. rep could come up with was "I think you'll have a lot of fun with it". Usually these guys will say anything to sell a movie, so if that's the biggest push they could devise, you know it's a dog. Gregory Hines plays a cop out to stop an escaped female android (to use their highly technical terminology, a bullet "screwed up her internal workings") before she blows up and takes out most of NYC. Renee Soutendijk slums to Hollywood after solid work in Paul Verhoeven's *THE FOURTH MAN* and *SPETTERS*, and Hines just looks tired. Slow, protracted and stupid, but at least Renee still looks good...*PREDATOR 2* is just as idiotic, but at least it moves. It's perfect grindhouse fodder, with a plot that's simply an excuse for wall-to-wall action (the alien "predator" goes hunting in Los Angeles of the near future) and an unbelievable cast of scenery chewers. One accident on the set would've wiped out half the bad actors in Actor's Equity. Just when you think the thesping has hit rock bottom with Maria Conchita Alonso or Gary Busey, along comes Morton Downey Jr. or Kent McCord to shake up your nervous system. And Danny Glover goes through so much shit he probably wishes he were in *TO SLEEP WITH ANGER PART 2* instead. This is typical dumb monster mayhem, which moves at top speed and sends most of the cast home in body bags. So what else could you ask for on 42nd Street?...Let's keep our fingers crossed that these theatres outlast the yuppiefuck realtors. If nothing else, I know the ammonia smell will. —Steve Puchalski

GET TO KNOW YOUR RABBIT (1972). Before sucking up to the big budget trail, Brian DePalma was known for his shoe-string counterculture comedies such as *GREETINGS* and *HI, MOM!* (both with Bobby DeNiro). For this, his first studio production, DePalma had a silly pipedream of taking his scathingly satirical viewpoint into the mainstream without having to dilute it. HA! The studio simply took the film away from him, did a drastic re-edit, and then buried it on the second half of one-week-only double bills. Proving you can't make an anti-Establishment comedy when the Establishment is footing the bills. But despite its disjointed nature and occasional silliness, there are some valid ideas and inspired moments sifted throughout...Tom Smothers (who thought this vehicle would make him a major star. Double HA!) plays Donald, a rising young corporate exec who gives up his job to become a tap dancing magician. He rents a fleabag flophouse, tosses on some seedy duds, and gets life lessons from Orson Welles, who bloats through the proceedings as Mr. Dallesandro. All the while Smothers is pursued by his sleazy, scheming ex-boss (the wonderful John Astin), who pesters Tom to return to his job and ends up a wino for his effort. All Tom wants is the freedom to do what he wants with his life, but DePalma illustrates with sly wit how even the best intentions of freedom can be corrupted and commercialized, when Smothers discovers his tap-dancing magician lifestyle has been twisted into a Corporation. With burnt-out businessmen who're tired of the rat race lured in with the promise of living life at the Gut Level as Tom Smother-clones. Its cynical viewpoint may have been blunted, but it's still there, and though his original ending was supposedly darker and bloodier, the studio's is simply incomprehensible and uplifting. Phooey!...There are absurd gags throughout which have nothing to do with the primary storyline (like a "party" consisting of 50 very sedate people crammed into one smoky hotel room, or Allen Garfield as a brassiere fetishist), and as always, DePalma runs amok with flashy camerawork. Unfortunately, the characters are strictly one-dimensional cartoons, and while Orson and Astin play off this fact, Katherine Ross (as "the terrific looking girl") seems embarrassingly airheaded. As for Smothers, well, the guy has all the personality of processed cheese spread...It's a somewhat fascinating, but very disjointed effort. And it's sad that a director who would so fervently push non-conformity, could later shit out white-washed corporate pignoslop like *BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES*. —Steve Puchalski



**"FUNNY!
TALENT and STYLE!"**

—N.Y. Daily News

**Get to know
your Rabbit**

STARRING
TOM SMOTHERS JOHN ASTIN
KATHARINE ROSS ORSON WELLES

TETSUO (1990). This is a fave that'll find a resting place in even the most jaded deviant's heart. It's Japanese high weirdness without subtitles—but there's no need for 'em either. Not for this nightmarish mindfuck, which culls ideas from Cronenberg and Lynch, while brutalizing the viewer with a *Bullet Train* pace, diseased sexuality and some of the finest (not to mention most disturbing) stop action animation I've seen all year. Its industrial wasteland atmosphere immediately brings to mind *ERASERHEAD*, and its homo-mechanical mutations are

in league with **VIDEODROME**, but this feature has a unique vision all its own, with stark black and white photography and a Ginsu-sharp sense of deranged humor. Director Shinya Tsukamoto certainly has a love for twisted metal and wire, and the opening sequence has our lead character painfully shoving a metal pipe into an open wound in his leg, which then crawls with maggots. I think we can all agree he's having a rough morning. He cuts himself shaving and it turns into a huge, pustulent wound; he's raped by a demonic woman with a pipe-penis (we're talked mega-butfucked); his own penis turns into a two-foot long drill bit that can hack up tabletops (not to mention his girlfriend, when she goes for a ride); and his body develops a bad case of H.R. Giger-itis—turning into a mass of burnt flesh and bio-mechanical wiring and metal. It all culminates when he's romanced by a punked-out demon, and they battle it out on the streets of Japan amidst some of the wildest pixillation since Norman McLaren. Man, in order to come up with this dark, surrealistic vision, the director must've had a severely bad year. Or decade. It never stops moving, never confronts the expected, and even if it reaches its peak a little early, it's still an unbelievably draining experience. Meticulously crafted, beautifully textured, and filtered through a seriously maladjusted mind. Just who is this filmmaker and (more importantly) when is he making another movie? —Steve Puchalski

TRUCK TURNER (1974). Thanks goes out to Orion Home Video for finally releasing this wonderful AIP blaxploitation classic. So what the hell took them so fucking long?!...Directed by Jonathan Kaplan (before he got a conscience with high-minded material like **THE ACCUSED**, and was churning out swill like **NIGHT CALL NURSES**), this is an action flick that starts slow, but eventually blasts its way into your heart. Isaac Hayes (primarily known for warbling the **SHAFT** theme) stars as the title homey, Mack "Truck" Turner, a bald skip tracer who hunts down bail jumpers and brings 'em back by "whatever means necessary" (yeah!). He's the perfect grindhouse hero—the type of dude who'll give his girlfriend a six of cheap beer instead of flowers, and doesn't think twice about slaughtering a dozen people to get his paycheck. There isn't much plot to speak of during the first half (lots of job-related hassles and romantic bullshit), but it begins to kick ass when Truck tracks down a pimp named Gator, and in retaliation a bounty is put on Turner's head—with every hit man in Central Casting after him. Man, you won't believe the bloodbath that ensues, with a wild hospital massacre topping it off! This flick has the highest bodycount of any blaxploiter I've ever seen, with solid shotgun action and quality squib work! It's seriously bloodthirsty schlock, and I loved it!...Isaac looks great and definitely can't act (luckily, I think he knew it), so he just barrels through the role and has a ball with it, accompanied by the top-notch supporting cast. Yaphet Kotto looks pissed off to be stuck in this shit after starring on Broadway in **THE GREAT WHITE HOPE**; Nichelle Nichols tosses away all semblance of Lt. Uhura in order to play the meanest, most foul-mouthed bitch on the planet; and look quickly for Scatman Crothers and Dick Miller. As usual, another highlight is the eye-popping wardrobe (especially at a pimp's funeral), blithely mixing plaid pants, platform shoes and felt hats. All of this nonsense is right on the precipice of campiness, and though some bits drag on, it's one of the better 42nd Street blasts from the past to resurface on video. —Steve Puchalski

SQUEAL OF DEATH and ENTERING TEXAS (1986/1989; FILM THREAT Video, P.O. Box 3170, Los Angeles CA 90078-3170; \$15 + \$2.90 postage).

If the minds of Tom Stern and Alex Winter are in any way similar to their films, I'd wager they're two severely fucked up individuals! If nothing else is true, they certainly know how to sledgehammer an audience about the funny bone. Because **SQUEAL OF DEATH** is the finest piece of rapid-fire foolishness I've seen in months—doing ANYTHING for a laugh while maintaining a **FORBIDDEN ZONE**-level of insanity. Churned out by Stern and Winter while hangin' out at NYU, and obviously inspired by their love for bad movies, cheap sight gags and **Midnight Dragon** ale. With Alex Winter playing almost all the roles, it barrels along like a live-action Tex Avery cartoon. Here's the story of a self-proclaimed "rebel without a clue"—Howie, a geeky teen who has romantic problems (blind dates tend to hang themselves rather than go out with him); family problems (his mom has a hat-pin through his brain, and his father forces him to eat his Green Slop); and anti-social tendencies (fantasies of gunning down all the neighborhood kids). But life as the next Crime Lord of New Jerk City is not without its drawbacks, such as hiding from the cops in Brooklyn (god, no!) or bending over for soap in the prison shower. This is absolutely demented four-star trash, and if the first little featurette wasn't enough, this tape also contains Stern and Winter's more recent encounter with The Butthole Surfers, who run amok in **ENTERING TEXAS**. Another lightning fast excursion into dementia, this is basically an extended video for the much-beloved group, with a typical American family (i.e. utter morons) taking a wrong turn off the highway and sharing dinner with a rural pack of Satanic cretins (yep, typecasting!). There's terror! Cannibalism! Music! And some extremely trippy visuals...A pair of seriously cool shorts, both essential for any video collection. —Steve Puchalski

A THANKSGIVING PRAYER BY WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS (1989) / FISHING WITH JOHN (1990) / ILE AIYE [THE HOUSE OF LIFE] (1989). Another essential NYC filmgoing venue is the Anthology Film Archives on the corner of 2nd Street and 2nd Avenue. Not only do they feature fine independent-oriented programming, but they also had the good sense to host a month-long Chrome, Scum and Celluloid series, which featured 18 of the best biker flicks from the '60s/'70s. The highlight of that particular batch was **DARKTOWN STRUTTERS**, which left the straighter audience members in a state of confusion and/or annoyance. But what else would you expect from a musical/comedy/motorcycle/blaxploitation flick written by George Armitage (**MIAMI BLUES**, **GAS-S-S-S**), and featuring a K.K.K. Grand Wizard in red leather hip boots and taffeta undies, an evil Colonel Sanders look-alike who's into cloning experiments, and a gang of female cyclists. It's one of



the most outrageously incredible miasmas ever put to film...On the artier (but no less enjoyable) end, their BANG festival gave us one of the most eclectic triple bills of 1990. Though all too short at only two-and-a-half minutes, *A THANKSGIVING PRAYER* is a b&w blast of Burroughs' caustic wit, as captured by director Gus Van Sant (*DRUGSTORE COWBOY*). With images of the flag and patriotic music as his backdrop, William S. faces the camera and reads us a prayer on the vulgarization of the American Dream. A scathingly honest indictment of U.S. hypocrisy and stupidity, in which he gives "thanks to a country of finks". The perfect message for any time of the year...Next up was the half-hour *FISHING WITH JOHN*, directed and starring actor/musician John Lurie (*STRANGER THAN PARADISE* and *The Lounge Lizards*). Filmed for Japanese TV, it's a deadly accurate satire on those tepid fishing shows that used to pop up on Saturday afternoons, with two definitively-urban New Yorkers at the helm—the deadpan Lurie and his rather-unwilling cohort, Jim Jarmusch. Accompanied by a quickly-ingrained theme song and hilariously dopey narration ("How deep is the ocean? No one knows."), they sail off the coast of Montauk in search of the great shark, while Jarmusch keeps asking himself "Why am I here?". But the tedium of the sea quickly takes its toll on the pair, and after a while they even try luring in a shark by holding a hunk of cheese over the water with their bare hand while Lurie aims a .45 at it. Filled with macho-bonding satire and droll humor, I'd love to check out more episodes, especially since Willem Dafoe and Tom Waits are glimpsed in the opening credits...Last, longest and (unfortunately) least was David Byrne's *ILE AIYE*, a documentary on Brazil's Bahia region and its religion. Byrne examines the connection between dance, music and the women who represent a conduit to their Gods (The Orixas) via trances. Well, after 50 minutes I thought I was going into a trance too. Or maybe it'd be more accurate to refer to it as "nodding off". Because even though the film is filled with wonderful South American music and loads of information, there's no focused point of view. And though Byrne obviously loves their culture, he fails to impart that fascination to the viewer. Most importantly, the tilted sense of humor you might expect from his work is non-existent. Interesting in spots, but no more than any average PBS special. —Steve Puchalski

EDWARD'S BARBER SHOP (1991). This is a trippy little short from up-and-coming filmmaker Dan Snyder, filled with humor that ranges from the cheap and disgusting (nothing wrong with that), to the wonderfully imaginative (which is even better). It's a 17-minute stream of consciousness piece, that begins deceptively inane and swiftly evolves into a non-linear dose of dementia, full of clever seques and HEAD-like rhythms. It's not easy to describe, but it's all easy to enjoy. From a hair styling demonstration on a trio of obviously-stoned degenerates at the title shop, to old men babbling incoherently in a bar. Plugs for Sklanthy Beer, and a brilliant TV parody for "The Man Alone", which takes top-notch editing and camerawork to its damaged limits. There are big sicko groans aplenty during the "Dermatology On The Air" show, featuring whiteheads the size of golf balls. And as the end credit states, "Any resemblance between these characters and actual living persons is a tragedy"...Combining technical finesse with a "Hey guys, let's make a video" spontaneity, you don't have to be altered to enjoy this featurette, but it probably helps. And I wouldn't be surprised if the filmmakers were in a similar state when they conceived it. Kudos to 'em all for pulling it off so well. —Steve Puchalski

POSSESSION (1981). Actress Isabelle Adjani is hot right now, after her arthouse success with *CAMILLE CLAUDEL*, the hysterical, er, historical romance with Rodin (the French artist, not the giant flying Toho monster). But here's her weirdest screen appearance, without question. Director Andrzej Zulawski headed up this multi-national hodgepodge (French actress, Australian actor, German locations, et cetera), and keeps the proceedings at a fever pitch from its first moments, creating a goofy, overdirected vision of the breakdown of a relationship. Best of all, the film is completely unapologetic for its unrelenting hysteria. Despite the Tilt-a-Whirl technique, I found much of it stunning, though it's no surprise that it never arrived in U.S. theatres, except in a hacked-to-shreds 80 minute version. For the record, I've waded through the full 2 hour European cut...The lovely Adjani co-stars with Sam Neill (*OMEN III*) as an estranged married couple. Isabelle has left her hubbie for someone else, and after Sam endures a nervous breakdown (complete with spasms and psychotic trances), he confronts Adjani about her mystery "man". All the while, we get to experience their emotional deterioration and detonation—from screaming and wailing and whacking each other, to Adjani bugging her eyes out and slicing herself with an electric carving knife (an action which only prompts Neill to copycat her, proving they're both nutcases and probably deserve each other). Overall, it makes *THE WAR OF THE ROSES* look like *FATHER KNOWS BEST*. And all the while, the camera spins, swoops and runs amok, as if the director of photography was on PCP (in fact, the camerawork was by Bruno Nuytten, who later directed *CAMILLE C.*). It's the first movie in which the audience will need Dramamine in order to simply watch a guy in a rocking chair. Oh, and did I mention that special effects wiz Carlos Rambaldi worked on this production? His job was to create Adjani's mysterious lover, which turns out to be a slimy, tentacled fish-like creature she gives on-screen birth to in a subway tunnel. The creature is some type of physical manifestation of her emotional turmoil, and she immediately takes it home and starts fucking it (yes, the lucky viewer gets to see this juicy duo, too)...And I bet you thought the first hour sounded demented, eh? Finally, in a *REPULSION*-esque style, Adjani begins brutally murdering any visitors who uncover her secret...Zulawski takes the breaking point which many people in shattered relationships go through, and splatters it onto the screen like a primal scream brought to life. The performances are laughably overblown (still, Adjani won overseas accolades for her hand-wringing and lump-fucking), and at times it doesn't make a lick of sense. At others I was roaring at its brazen dementia. While other scenes were so powerful they managed to tear at old wounds...It's a difficult movie that veers wildly between the Asinine and the Unforgettable, and it's packed with disorienting compositions and images. I was thoroughly impressed by its wrongheaded audacity, while finding myself touched by some of the razor-edged pain on display. Overall, it's an odd, disturbing mish-mash of monsters, mayhem and emotional meltdowns. If only more movies could be so daring (though it'd be nice if they could be a bit more coherent too, while they're at it). —Steve Puchalski



LUTHER THE GEEK (1990). Good title. Good film. And it manages to avoid being your basic slasherama with its wonderful title character. During the prologue we're shown little Luther's fascination with a carnival geek. And when he loses his front teeth and has them replaced with razor sharp incisors, he also picks up a taste for human blood. That's the type of attitude problem that can keep a guy institutionalized for 25 years. But when his bleeding-heart lawyers get Luther sprung, he's back on the prowl—for lunch! You won't believe this guy, either! He's got the look of a balding, 40-year-old streetperson, clucks like a chicken instead of talking, nonchalantly roams into supermarkets for a snack of raw eggs, and for desert, chews out the throat of an old woman waiting at the bus stop. In addition, he's not a just another dirt-dumb psychopath (even though his sloppy Donner Party eating habits leave a bit to be desired). Though lacking in the social niceties, he's certainly efficient in his work, and Edward Terry pulls off a twistedly funny/evil portrait of insanity—going right out on the edge with this first cousin to the CHAINSAW clan...Most of the storyline involves Luther's visit to a secluded farmhouse, and his hour-long terrorizing of the

family, from trussing up mom (Joan Roth) to playing cat and mouse with the teenage kids. While this type of stalk 'n' kill structure is familiar, director Carlton J. Albright does a damned good job with a worn out concept. The film (happily) doesn't go for lame wisecracks, and keeps its creepy tone at the forefront, along with flashes of heavy gore. When its not going for solid shocks, it's laced with demented doses of sick humor. A genuine pleasure, and schlock filmmaking at its brutal best! —Steve Puchalski



HARRY LAUTER · JACK NICHOLSON · CAROLYN MITCHELL

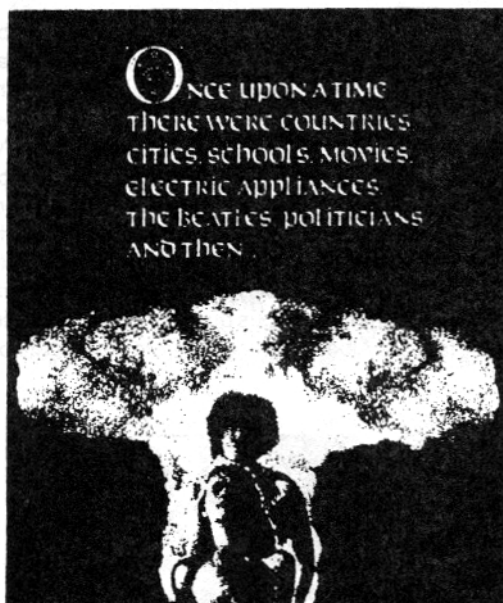
THE CRY BABY KILLER (1959). Ready for a laugh? It's Jack Nicholson's first film! Yes, even before he burrowed a niche into our hearts as Wilbur Force in Corman's *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*, he paved his way to future fame and flab in this juvenile delinquent low-budgeter. For this tough, short drama, Jack stars as Jimmy Wallace, a weaselly little punk with already-thinning hair. And when his girl is stolen away by another local tough, Jimmy grabs a gun and through a series of twists, finds himself holed up in a motel room with a trio of hostages (a woman, her baby and a black janitor) as the police (referred to as "low-down dirty lyin' cops" by Jack) surround the place. A crowd of spectators quickly converges, including the media (Ed Nelson, as a reporter from WQQQ), who's hungry for blood from this "mad beast", but all of this outside nonsense is strictly routine. It's inside the motel room where the real entertainment is lurking. The claustrophobia of the setting adds a smattering of tension, and Jack is nothing short of magnificent, in one of the most one-dimensional, overwrought roles of his career! Just try to keep a straight face when he shoves his gun into the baby's side! And he already had his snivelling down to a virtual art form. If you're looking for a policier in the "Dragnet" mold, this movie is a mess. But for Nicholson fans, it's a must...And what band is gonna be the first to cover the flick's amazing title song ("Sweat was pourin' from offa his brow, / Wasn't no hope for him no how.")? —Steve Puchalski

BLACK DEVIL DOLL FROM HELL (1984). Is this camcorder creature feature the future of Z-level video schlock? If it is, could you be so kind as to pass me the straight razor? Because this repulsive, unprofessional, piece of shit is so crude and vile-headed it's like some deviant's chromosome-damaged home movies. The picture goes in and outta focus during close-ups, the lighting shifts in mid-sentence, the looping is hit-and-miss, and the soundtrack music is often so loud you can't hear the dialogue (which might be a blessing in disguise). In other words, it's so god awful I couldn't help but gawk in amazement at it. The culprit is director/writer Chester N. Turner, who must've been damned proud of his work since his directorial credit is held on the screen for a full 30 SECONDS! It's a blaxploitation take on *TRILOGY OF TERROR* (remember Karen Black and her Zuni warrior doll?), starring a pack of Turner's pals from the neighborhood—actors so inept they make Rudy Ray Moore look like James Earl Jones!...At the forefront is Shirley L. Jones (I assume she added the "L" so we wouldn't confuse her with the Partridge Family mom) as our god-fearing heroine, Helen Black, who has enough religious literature littering her apartment to start her own Catholic Shop. One day this Bible-boob purchases a sinister little dreadlocked ventriloquist dummy, takes it home, and gets worried when she starts having fantasies about getting fucked by the dummy (not to mention chancing a serious case of splinters). The Devil Doll begins moving from room to room whenever her back is turned, talking in a baritone growl, and it climaxes at midpoint with her long, protracted rape by the horny puppet. Guess what? She loves it! In other words, Willie Tyler and Lester this ain't! Soon she's seducing the dummy, because she's addicted to his pinewood pecker, and when she straps on some of the neighborhood studs they don't come close to measuring up to her Little Fella...Believe it or not, this flick is SEVERELY offensive to women, and by the end it mutates into a black REPULSION, though without a shred of good taste or technical savvy. It revels unashamedly in its own misogynistic mindset and utter incompetency, and I can't imagine an uglier, more unbelievably inept piece of rotgut. Difficult to endure, impossible to forget, and loads of fun to discuss afterward (sorta like bragging about battle wounds). —Steve Puchalski

BAXTER (1990). This French film was being self-touted as a "vicious comedy", which is usually a bad sign with me, because whenever I walk into a situation that promises dark, demented laughs, I'm invariably disappointed at the utter tameness of it all. This clever little treat proved the exception...The first feature from Jerome Boivin, on the surface its high concept might sound like a *LOOK WHO'S TALKING* for canines—the human race as observed through the mind of a dog. But it's deeper and crueler than just that. The title character, Baxter, is a repugnant lump on four legs, a bull terrier so ugly you can't help but laugh at first sight. Yet as he watches the world from his window, Baxter's inner observations on the stupidity of human existence are dead on, whether he's remarking on man's seemingly-bizarre customs, or wondering why people make such strange noises behind their bedroom doors. Initially given as a gift to an increasingly senile old lady, the willful pooch becomes increasingly curious about the young couple next door. So after disposing of the old woman (with a convenient push down the stairs), Baxter becomes the neighbor's new pet, and all seems right with the world. That is, until the couple has a baby and Baxter

becomes jealous of this bald, useless, new addition to the household. Perhaps another "push" when the parents' backs are turned will set things straight? But the creepiest portion is saved for last, when Baxter finally finds a human he can respect, in the form of a Nazi-obsessed schoolboy who's digging a replica of Hitler's bunker in a junkyard and trains Baxter to be an attack dog...Wow! This is a small, near-perfect film that maintains a low-key tone throughout and is never compromised by a flicker of light. Chock full of undiluted cynicism and nervous laughs. Unfortunately, I can imagine the idea being bought by some cretinous Tinseltown studio and turned into yet another soft-as-a-beer-shit U.S. remake of a far superior Euro-original. —Steve Puchalski

GLEN AND RANDA (1971). Long before moving uptown with *THE BIG EASY* and *GREAT BALLS OF FIRE*, director Jim McBride spat out this highly-acclaimed, post-apocalyptic shaggy dog tale. Which nowadays only proves that back then, anything could be embraced by the underground press. Even something this uniformly annoying. There are no names in the cast, no budget to speak of, and often no clothes on the actors. And this lack of wardrobe is why the flick received an X-rating during its original release—not for any sexual episodes, but because the stars occasionally stand around with their genitals hanging out...Glen and Randa are two pretty young people living after the



GLEN AND RANDA

end of civilization—hanging out in a make-shift commune and digging through the past. Steven Curry and Shelley Plimpton star, and though I'm sure they were supposed to be wondrously innocent, I just considered 'em vapid, braindead imbeciles. People so ignorant they make Billy Jack's Freedom School look like Mensa candidates (and that ain't easy to do). Watching these perpetually happy, ragtag hippies wandering through the woods really got on my nerves after a while, and I wanted to give the entire cast a collective boot in the ass, in hope of knocking some sense into their brains. At least there's a few laughs (but they're over all too soon) when an old "magician" shows up with a trailerful of beat-up appliances, a pitchman's scam, and tales of the once prospering Big City. And since G&R always take the ass-backwards route, they head off to find Metropolis (from the *SUPERMAN* comic). It'd be nice if something actually happened during the 90+ minutes. Nope. They find a horse, look at a comic book, Randa gets pregnant, they encounter an old fisherman, et cetera, but there's a big difference between Naturalism and simple Tedium. Co-scripted by Rudy Wurlitzer (*TWO-LANE BLACKTOP*), this is truly one of the most depressing looks at the end of civilization I've ever witnessed. The thought of these hairballs inheriting the planet after we're all gone is worse than any other nightmare scenario. I'd rather have Cornelius and Zira running the place. —Steve Puchalski

THE BED SITTING ROOM (1969). Now here's how to make a film about the end of the world! After his celluloid success with *The Beatles*, director Richard Lester was allowed to turn out a string of wonderfully uncommercial gems such as *PETULIA*, *THE KNACK* and *HOW I WON THE WAR*. But this particular film is the one that nearly killed his career forever, despite starring some of England's greatest comic talents. Unsuspecting folks are still scratching their heads at it all, and the studio's baffling anti-campaign only kicked

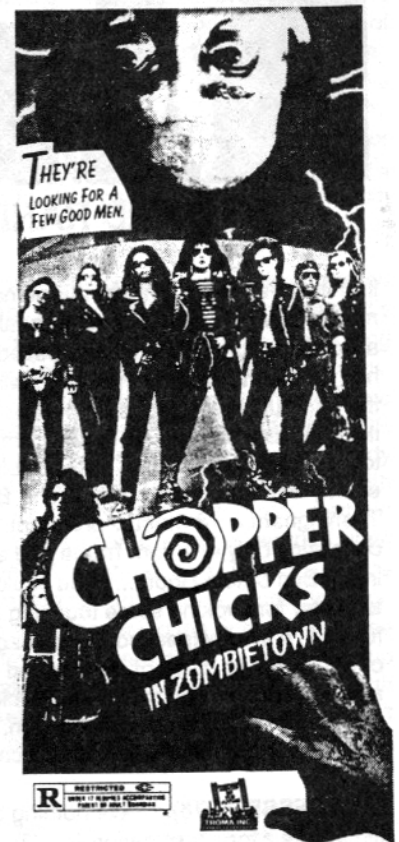
it while it was down. With all this going against it, you can well understand why I love this film so much. It's one of the most gorgeously insane movies ever created. A post-apocalyptic comedy with Beckett-like aspirations, which is so visionary it utterly alienated all but the most absurdity-attuned individuals. Based on a play by Spike Milligan and John Antrobus, this is a savagely warped view of England after war has turned the country into a wasteland—killing over 40 million in just 2 minutes and 28 seconds. In typically unperturbed British fashion, the handful of survivors stumble through the rubble, doing their best to ignore the irritating fact that their world has gone down the loo. And the script is a string of vignettes from their altered lives...One family lives on the still-operating Circle Line subway, running out during stops to pilfer candy machines. Peter Cook and Dudley Moore patrol the area in a weather balloon, ordering people to "keep moving" so that the enemy can't get a fix on 'em. The BBC is now a door-to-door newscaster who sits in the framework of your TV and reads to you. Rita Tushingham is 18-months pregnant, and Marty Feldman is a nurse who aids in the delivery. There are "houses" in the middle of the desert, consisting only of a door frame and a couch. Death Certificates are issued to living persons. And Ralph Richardson seems to be mutating into a Bed Sitting Room...If you couldn't already guess, don't look for easy laughs in this cynical, brutal, absurdist epic. And credit must go to Lester for evoking some touching moments of loss amidst the bizarre goings on, not to mention some of the most striking images of the future I've ever witnessed. He manages to locate some of the most desolate, junk-strewn vistas imaginable, consisting of literal mountains of old shoes or miles of abandoned autos. The costumes consist of rags and scraps tied together, and Rube Goldberg-style inventions abound, such as one man on a bicycle providing the country's electricity. Overall, this is a remarkable achievement in both texture and tone, with jaw-dropping production design. Sure, the ending tends to self-destruct in on itself, but then again, where the hell could it go? Besides, not many other films give you advice on what to do when your father mutates into a parrot (Eat him, of course!). —Steve Puchalski

MAITRESSE (1976). I have nothing but admiration for director Barbet Schroeder. Normalcy seems to hold no interest for the man, and his films have a fond fascination with life's niches—whether it's a documentary on Idi Amin or a *REVERSAL OF FORTUNE* glimpse at the filthy rich. Even rarer, he exposes these niches without making judgement on them. So I was glad to get a look at this early work of his, even though it was in French and without subtitles. I gave it my best shot and discovered that its images (courtesy of cinema wizard Nestor Almendros) were enough to convey this S&M romance...Gerard Depardieu stars as a small-time burglar who breaks into an apartment only to discover a full array of rubber and leather lingerie goods and dominatrix gear. Plus nooses, chains and (last but not least) a guy caged up like an animal. It's a cold, neon-lit Palace of Pain, and a staircase lowers from the ceiling to reveal Bulle Ogier as the petite blonde who runs the place. Though Bulle has a frail, waiflike quality about her, when she's on the job she has no second-thoughts about nailing a client's dick to a board (at his own request, of course). Gerard quickly becomes her partner in grime as love blooms amidst the on-screen masochism. Despite Depardieu's obvious confusion at his new girlfriend's deviant customers, he follows her out of love, even though his heart isn't into the odd jobs (like helping

out with the occasional spanking). But the merde hits the fan when Gerard begins prying into Bulle's secret past...If you haven't caught on yet, this flick isn't exactly for the PRETTY WOMAN set. Yet even though the subject matter would garner the film an NC-17 rating nowadays, it's never exploitative. The camera doesn't flinch, and Barbet never resorts to cheap shock tactics either, relying instead on characterization. Some of the sexuality on display wasn't exactly my cup of tea (especially that penis hammering), but the wardrobes definitely held my attention, and it's a kinky little ride. Of course, Normal Folks will probably just walk out after 20 minutes, because they're dumb fucks. ..Best of all is seeing Gerard Depardieu in one of his early works. Now that the lug has become a veritable institution to the French film industry (rolling out movies faster than McDonald's churns out cases of gastritis), won the Best Actor award at Cannes last year for CYRANO, and even broke into U.S. multiplexes with GREEN CARD, it's good to see a pic from his riskier days, when he headlined hard-edged wonders like GOING PLACES and THE LAST WOMAN. And as I overheard another person say, "If Depardieu is France's greatest sex symbol, it's no wonder they worship Jerry Lewis."...Though frustrating in the way arthouse indulgences can often be (in this case, the strange open-ending), MAITRESSE is quite powerful and still ahead of its time. —Steve Puchalski

MONDO ELVIS (1984; Rhino Video). Direct from Wasted Lives Inc. comes this hour-long look at one of the most obsessed packs of peabrains to grace the earth. You guessed it! Elvis Presley fanatics! Director Thomas Corboy tosses the viewer headfirst into the unbelievable world of Elvis Addicts. Flatheads who are still devoting their entire existence to The King, even though the guy's nothing but a maggot meal nowadays. You get to meet your basic Elvis impersonators; check out a memorabilia auction held at a Howard Johnson's; laugh at the teary-eyed testimonials about how they've been coping with Life Without Elvis; plus see firsthand how merchandisers are still soaking these rubes for every penny they can get (like selling bags of dirt from Presley's yard). Happily, the filmmakers aren't members of this Elvis Cult, but they've infiltrated its most neanderthal depths while milking the interviews for all the chuckles they can get. For example, we meet one toothless old farmer who legally changed his name to Elvis Presley because people told him he resembled The King. There's a pair of twins reporting on their psychic link to dead Elvis and their belief that he was their real father. And we also have the Queen of the White Trash—an ol' bag who tells us her pathetic fantasies about screwing Elvis...Here's a little news for all these folks: (To steal a line from William Shatner) "Get a life!"...After a while you want to beat 'em all with a heavy mallet (don't worry—it couldn't make their brains any softer), or castrate these clowns so their genes don't get passed onto any future generations. Overall, this video isn't as insightful as other humorous bumpkin-documentaries like GATES OF HEAVEN, but it's good for several "What a bunch of hick losers!" laughs. You'll feel like Albert Fucking Einstein in comparison. —Steve Puchalski

CHOPPER CHICKS IN ZOMBIETOWN (1991; Troma). What have we here? A combination monster/biker movie featuring a cast of sexy, leather-clad bimbos straddling choppers. What more could anyone ask for in an exploitation movie?...And though I might've gone into it expecting just another amusingly-titled chunk of TroManure, this turned out to be an ingenious little romp...In the grand tradition of THE WILD ONE, the story begins when The Cycle Sluts, a eight-pack of biker babes, rolls into the town of Zariah for some cheapjack fun. But this hick town has bigger problems than a bunch of horny babes invading their homes (we should all have such problems, eh?)—namely, a quickly dwindling population thanks to crazed funeral director Don Calfa, who's been reanimating the dead and using them as slave labor outside of town. When the Zombie Brigade breaks free and slowly begins shuffling toward town (accompanied by a hilariously bouncy soundtrack), the Sluts put aside their amoral values and come to the rescue, saving not only the nit-witted townspeople, but also a busload of blind orphans...Hey, I never said it was an incredibly believable premise, did I? But it's easily one of Troma's most purely enjoyable releases, filled with honest laughs and cool characters, even if director/writer Dan Hoskins gets a little inconsistent at times. There are a few dull lulls in the opening half, when the ladies each get a chance to explain why they took to the road, but once the ridiculous plot gets rolling, nothing can stop it! Because the only way to halt these blotchy, purple-skinned corpses is to destroy the batteries which keep 'em moving, which are stored in (take a guess...) their heads! Yes, Gratuitous Violence Lovers, the Cycle Sluts have to knock their heads clean off, in a finale the includes baseball bats, butane torches, a chainsaw, and even a staple gun to seal their mouths shut! It's packed with great gory laughs, and wait 'til the undead get their own guns! WOW!...All the young ladies get a round of applause for digging into their raunchy roles with glee, with Jamie Rose as DeeDee and Catherine Carlen as their all too believable "bull dyke" leader Rox. While Don Calfa succeeds by simply bugging out his eyes and doing a young Royal Dano impression. And the stars get loads of support from the rest of the cast—from a scene stealing, wise-cracking blind kid, to a dwarf who turns to evil because he's tired of being called "cute", to zombie-appetizer Martha Quinn (who, despite being my fave MTV VJ, is a Zero in the acting department). And the undead are a hoot! Particularly when they take over the town and go about their old business, such as sitting on porches suckin' down whiskey, or mowing the road...Solid action, drippy gore, cool tunes and hot "chopper chicks". Like I asked earlier, what more could you ask for? Hey, how about a sequel! —Steve Puchalski



THE KING OF NEW YORK, Abel Ferrara and the New York Film Festival: It all began when Mr. Keyes and I decided to rub elbows with the Snob Squad by taking a trip uptown to the NY Film Festival. It's not often you'll find us mingling with the stuffed shirts, or out for an afternoon matinee of High Art at Lincoln Center, but this was a special occasion. Because this Sunday they were premiering the latest flick from director Abel Ferrara (MS. 45), entitled THE KING OF NEW YORK, which offered the guy his biggest budget, best cast and a chance at some major league venues. The night before The Keyes and I had indulged a bit (so what else is new?), swilling back several six packs, and ending with a White Castle raid at four in the morning. So still nursing our double hangovers, we stumbled blindly through the throngs of Normals, kicked back in our comfy seats and got down to this gangland flick...Christopher Walken stars as Frank White, a mob kingpin who's released from

prison and decides to take back his turf. In Ferrera's world, the cops are all shithheads, the rest of the cast spends the entire film packing their noses with coke and wasting each other, and Walken's the nominal hero only because he wants to divert some of his cashflow back into the community. Walken gives one of his typically unique performances, initially coming off so glassy-eyed and mannered he's virtually invisible, but quickly proving he's capable of leaving silver dollar-sized bullet holes in his wake. And Larry Fishburne is incredible as Walken's flashy right-hand-man—a guy so cool he can steal a scene simply by ordering fried chicken. There's a wild car chase sequence, more automatic weapons than I've seen since SCARFACE, and breathtaking spasms of kickass street violence pulled off with dazzling directorial panache. Above all though, this is a great, amoral crime drama that's as nasty and brutal as anything that's hit the Deuce in the past year, and slick enough to pull the wool over the Festival's eyes. Plus fans of James Lorinz (FRANKENHOOKER) will be interested to know he's on-screen for two-minutes as a cop who's given a fire hydrant as a hat...But the most fun of the afternoon came after the end credits, when the film was met by both cheers and catcalls from the sold-out house. Adding to the rowdiness, director Ferrera was there to take questions from these braindead artfucks. Sitting on stage and swearing like a longshoreman, he was accused of "pointless violence" by the self-righteous saps who were insulted that they'd been suckered into sitting through such a fine, sleazy romp. Obviously, they wanted a pious anti-drug diatribe—in other words, a completely different film—and they vented their three-piece-suited spleens at its maker. It was also obvious that Ferrera, who sat there sunglassesed, didn't give a shit about their opinions. "If you don't like it, get up and leave," he told them, adding "what are you, masochists?" And just to piss 'em off further, he informed them "there's was no difference between Lincoln Center and Times Square". Actually, there is. A Times Square crowd is a hell of a lot more entertaining than this room of cardboard bores. When asked about the film's unapologetic non-stand on the subject of drugs, Abel responded with "If people wanna smoke some crack in a washing machine box, it's their right." Oh, I'm sure Abel got a kick out of being thrown to this pack of peabrains, because it's not often a guy who makes a film called DRILLER KILLER gets to mouth off at the NY Film Fest. Keyes and I gave Abel's Attitude a thumbs up, while I considered putting a size 11 footprint into the back of the head of a senile old fart sitting in the next row up, who wouldn't stop whining to his bovine ball 'n' chain. Overall, it was good to see the Avery Fisher crowd knocked down a peg or two, and it even made us forget about our headaches for a little while. —Steve Puchalski

A HERO OF OUR TIME (1987). This stark black and white short is the first work from director Michael Almereyda, who would break into features with the fine (and all too underseen) TWISTER. Like TWISTER, this featurette is a beautifully atmospheric plunge into a world of quirky characters, but with a decidedly darker, seedier edge to the proceedings. Kevin Jarre stars as Peck, a leather-jacketed hood (the GQ magazine type) who runs into a pretty young woman named Ryo, and decides to take her away from her troubles (not to mention her male companion). But what gives the film its bite is the fact Almereyda managed to snag Dennis Hopper for the small role of the ditched date. And when this clean 'n' mean Hop has his squeeze whisked away, he spends the entire film tracking them down to a remote desert shack, where the two have spent the entire time acting vague and disaffected. As in BLUE VELVET, Hopper's role isn't the lead, but he's a pivotal character who sparks the story to life whenever he appears. Surprisingly quiet, he seems perpetually ready to explode out of his suit jacket, like an overwound watch spring. Unfortunately, the two leads (Jarre and Natalie Zimmerman) are stylized stiffies, and the only time Ryo breaks through with even a glimmer of enthusiasm is during an impromptu dance through her home. The film never peaks though—as Hopper's dangerous rhythms might lead you to believe—preferring instead to simply drift off into the horizon...On a technical level, the film is flawless. The photography is gorgeous, and it utilizes the same quirky soundtrack as TWISTER. Heavy on atmosphere and light on actual plot, Almereyda keeps his shots rigidly composed and the effect is hypnotic (if a little stilted in the Emotion Department), with moments of off-key humor lurking in the sidelines. Almereyda is definitely a filmmaker with an offbeat grasp on reality, but instead of bellowing his intentions (like many trendy directors are known to do), Almereyda follows a low-key approach which slowly seduces the viewer. A HERO OF OUR TIME is a remarkable first effort. —Steve Puchalski

RED AND ROSY (1989; FILM THREAT Video, P.O. Box 3170, Los Angeles CA 90078-3170; \$15 + \$2.90 postage). Set amongst the dregs of the auto racing world, this is one seriously warped vision! A weave of documentary footage, dark comedy, surrealist images, animation, and a finale so fiendishly damaged I'm not gonna describe it, because I want you to make the effort to see it for yourself. Dedicated to drag racers, the 20-minute film delves into the legend of "Big Red" Friedman, a dragster king who literally becomes addicted to the adrenaline buzz, and turns into a recluse with his gal Rosy. Meanwhile, adrenaline abuse becomes rampant in a wake to emulate the hero, and pre-teens even begin to carry around Red's body parts (his penis and balls), which were allegedly blown off in an accident. Though I considered it completely alien territory, speed freaks will be drooling buckets over the racing milieu, and we'll ALL be laughing at its crude perfection. Director Frank Grow continually changes gears on us, as disorientation spreads by way of the madness inherent in the material, as well as its mind-roasting method. It may not be consistent and it may over-reach itself, but there's some wild stuff on display with a cutting edge of nightmarish brilliance. Music provided by the Blood Pumper Racing Club. —Steve Puchalski

HAXAN a.k.a. WITCHCRAFT THROUGH THE AGES (1922). This remarkable silent film is basically an educational primer on witchcraft and the black arts. Made in Denmark, director Benjamin Christensen illustrates his history lesson with anecdotes, animation, and jaw-dropping imagery. It begins with a quick overview on the origins of witchcraft, from Egypt to the (then) present, with twisted puppet representations of Hell, but most of the film is a series of docu-drama vignettes depicting sorcerers, magic powders, spells, and various demonic festivities—with many of the episodes laced in humor (such as when a fat guy starts chasing his maid after chugging a Love Potion). We're shown witches cooking up potions; apparitions of beasts and women dancing; kissing the devil's arse and feasting on unbaptized children; and lots of Middle Ages sinning, thanks to Lucifer's guile and deception. One of my favorite sequences involves chaos at a convent, with the Sisters slamdancing after witnessing Satan. Another long piece chronicles a witchhunt led by the Inquisition, including how they purify evil thoughts by the lash and burn an innocent young woman at the stake. And we're taught that although Satan's minions can be young and beautiful in rare cases, most are "wretched, old, poor, and dirty". Director Christensen also appears before the camera in the role of the devil, and provides the film with its most startling images. His Satan is a bare-chested, barrel-chested seducer, with twisted horns and wagging tongue—and he cuts as striking a presence as Max Schreck's NOSFERATU...In the '60s, the film was re-edited by Anthony Balch (TOWERS OPEN FIRE) with added narration by William S. Burroughs. It's wonderful to hear Burroughs' evocative monotone presiding over all this debauchery, and you're sure to smile at some of his remarks, such as when he describes the questioning of a witch as a "tough cop/

calm cop" routine which is "still used in police stations around the world". Balch's discordant, jazzy score is a little grating though...HAXAN is a wonderful artifact which, though admittedly dated, provides a whirlpool of unforgettable, demonic sequences. Best of all, although neither God's nor Satan's forces come off too well, at least Lucifer's disciples seem to be having a good time. —Steve Puchalski

TONIGHT FOR SURE (1962). Now that Francis Coppola is riding high with the overrated, overinflated GODFATHER III, I figured it was time to reach back into his shadowy past and pluck out this sexploitation comedy that he helmed at the tender age of 22, when his mind was clearly on baser human instincts—namely, nekkid women and making a quick buck. Clocking in at just over 60 minutes, this clinker is both boring and utterly undistinguished, without a hint of experimentation which might've made the outing unique. And believe it or not, viewing it is almost as painful as Coppola's stupefying "Life Without Zoe" segment of NEW YORK STORIES (one of my grimmest moments of moviewatching in the last decade)...Set on the Sunset Strip, this is the inane tale of two moralistic males who decide to fight against the increasing tide of vice by blowing up a nudie nightclub. One's a western bumpkin who rides into town on a burro, the other's a city slicker, and as their time bomb ticks away, they sit in the nightclub and exchange stories about the evils of sin and lewd women (of course, while they're gabbing, the burlesque babes are strutting their stuff on stage behind 'em). The cowboy explains how one friend had terrifying delusions that every woman around him was naked (if only I could have such terrifying delusions). The other is a closet lecher who preaches morality as an excuse to play voyeur with a nude model. No subtlety here, folks! The men are slobbering fools, the women are busty fleshpots, the attempts at humor are deadening, and the entire budget is less than what Coppola spends nowadays on a week's worth of cannolis...On a positive note, Francis at least found some attractive young women to play the scenery and lingers appreciably on their wares. But down deep, this is just another middling example of "Here's the film, where's my goddamned paycheck?" sexploitation, which was good for a quick payoff to the raincoat brigade. Starring Karl Schanzer and Donald Kenney, with feeble photography by director-to-be Jack Hill (FOXY BROWN, SWITCHBLADE SISTERS) and music by "Carmen" Coppola. —Steve Puchalski

THE EXOTIC ONES (1968). For its New Orleans-soaked ambience and go-go dancing milieu alone, you gotta love this movie! It's a rapid fire achievement in kitchen sink exploitation from director/writer Ron Ormond (who earlier brought the masses the incredible MESA OF THE LOST WOMEN). Aching cheezy, crudely produced, featuring the lamest actors south of the Mason-Dixon and a swamp beast so savage he'll rip off a guy's arm and then proceed to beat the poor bastard to death with his own bloody limb. Wow!! Now THAT'S entertainment!...The story begins in Okefenokee Swamp, where a seven-foot-tall neanderthal with major orthodontia problems strikes again and sucks another hick into the muck. By sheer coincidence, Nemo's Bourbon Street stripclub begins looking for a new attraction to pull in the tourists, and they decide to capture this Swamp Monster and put it on display amidst the exotic dancers. Bright idea, you clods! Don't you realize that once the creature gets to civilization it's going to escape and go on a rampage, in mini-KING KONG style? So I admit it's not very original, but does it really matter when the plot is crammed with so many sleazy joys? Like a bevy of dancing dames with wondrous '60s wardrobes (I love those white go-go boots!); a monster that geeks a chicken on-stage and sounds like the Tasmanian Devil; mobsters so mean they'll force a guy to drink from a spittoon; plus the required naive-young-miss who's led into this den of sin with promises of becoming a "singer" (nudge nudge). Would you believe the actors even talk straight into the camera? The entire silly-assed enterprise zips along like a crude Russ Meyer flick, and I personally believe the entire package should be declared a national treasure since it captures the late-'60s French Quarter on film for posterity. —Steve Puchalski

THE NINTH CONFIGURATION a.k.a. TWINKLE, TWINKLE, KILLER KANE (1980).

This utterly fantastic film never had a chance. I first saw it on Times Square when first released (for a whopping one week), before its studio dumped on it. A decade later, it still stands as a hilariously dazzling piece of cinema. Edited at a breakneck pace, stylized to unreal levels, and (best of all) demanding on its audience. Directed and written by EXORCIST-author William Peter Blatty (in addition to being based on his early novel), you can tell this was conceived by an artist in love with the printed word, since the give-and-take between characters is often more theatrical than cinematic, and the script revels in verbal puns and dueling wits. Blatty also pulls together a top-notch ensemble cast of recognizable character actors, including Jason Miller, Scott Wilson, Ed Flanders, Neville Brand, Robert Loggia, Moses Gunn, and Joe Spinell... The primary setting of the story is a secluded castle that's been turned into a secret government "study center". In other words, a loony bin for cracked U.S. bigwigs (generals, astronauts, et cetera). The inmates are brilliant, unstable and completely rebellious in the face of authority (as one guard puts it, they're "nuttier than a wagonload of pralines"), so when a new head doctor (Stacy Keach) arrives, they're ready to play some serious mindfucking games on him. But the surprise is that Keach seems almost as crazed and glassy-eyed as the prisoners, and his first new directive is to "indulge" the men's fantasies...What makes the film so exceptional is its combination of demented humor, suspense and unexpected bouts of inspired weirdness. All the actors play it over-the-top with surrealistic one-liners galore, and the ensemble works beautifully together, like a well-oiled funhouse. Keach, in particular, is a stand-out. Always one of my favorite actors, Stacy's never been known for his consistent choice of roles. Depending on how much blow his sinuses are packed with, he can veer from the realistic FAT CITY and the mindblown END OF THE ROAD, to the flat out "What day is it? Where am I? And what's that camera doing there?" confusion of BUTTERFLY. This is the type of film where his quirkiness meshes



perfectly with the oddball surroundings. Who else could keep a straight face as Jason Miller and Joe Spinell discuss how they're adapting Shakespeare for dogs? Or deal with Moses Gunn in a Superman costume? How about Loggia believing he's actually on Venus, knee deep in fungus?...Sleazemavens will be interested to note that this flick also boasts one of the hottest biker sequences in the last decade, with more blood, violence and anti-social behavior packed into 10 minutes than most ol' '60s cycloramas had in their full 90! It's a riveting eruption of ultra-violence (and it even features Richard Lynch!)...What Blatty lacks in directorial finesse he makes up for ten-fold in intensity and originality, and many sequences are sure to echo long afterward in your brainpan (one of the most disorienting is when an astronaut's moonwalk is interrupted by the appearance of a crucified Jesus Christ). This is one of the great overlooked films of all time, and each time I view it I find myself further impressed. And Blatty's ten-years-later directorial follow-up, EXORCIST III, had similar strengths at its core (though my enjoyment of it might've been heightened by the shots of Jagermeister beforehand and the wonderful company during). —Steve Puchalski

NIGHTMARE SISTERS (1989; Trans World Entertainment). First off, I should tell you that I didn't spend Dime One on this embarrassment, so I didn't feel a fraction as stupid as anyone who actually shelled out bucks for this fleshfeast. Filmed in only four days, the effects are plastic, the humor is at the 8th grade level, the script is nonexistent, and the entire project is one-take trash. In other words, it's a typical production from David DeCoteau! There's only one level on which this film works: As a field day for shut-in horror fans who want to yank their mutton in front of the VCR. Because this penny-ante pic is just an excuse for (highly-overrated) '80s scream queens Linnea Quigley, Brinke Stevens and Michelle McClellan (Bauer) to romp around in various stages of undress. The trio of tarts start off by playing three nerdy sorority sisters—Linnea's got Mr. Ed-sized buck teeth and a singing voice that'd drag in dogs for miles; Brinke is a bespectacled Lisa Lupner-clone; and Michelle is your basic tub o' lard. One night, these gals invite three equally spastic guys from a neighboring frat over for a triple date, but trouble ensues when they play seance with a "crystal ball" (re: plastic globe) Brinke found at a garage sale. A Jambí-like genie appears and amidst a lightshow of cheezy effects, the women are transformed into horny, naked, succubus sluts...It's amusing (in a rather pathetic way) to watch the gals play against type as the loser ladies, but the film's *raison d'être* is its later half—having them pose in g-strings, fondle each other, spread cream pies over their breasts, or take the most prolonged group bath in screen history. See Michelle swallow any entire banana! Listen to Linnea sing a punk ditty! Watch Brinke play a lollipop-sucking nymphet! Just don't let 'em near your boner, guys, because one taste and you disintegrate amidst a flurry of fire extinguisher fog (or as the script so eloquently puts it, "they bit his dick and he crumbled to dust". Pinter, it ain't...)...It's cheap schlock that delivers bare skin by the bucketful, though it's never a fraction as clever as it thinks it is. Witlessly written by Kenneth J. Hall (EVIL SPAWN), this is pure T&A exploitation that panders to the lowest common denominator and smirks all the way to the bank. —Steve Puchalski

OUCH! (1990; FILM THREAT VIDEO, P.O. Box 3170, Los Angeles CA 90078-3170; \$9.95 + \$2.90 postage). Direct from the mind of Christian Gore (self-promotion wiz and editor of FILM THREAT magazine) comes this 25 minute video that's packed with cheap, gory guffaws. Glenn Barr stars as an unemployed young man who's still living in suburbia with his mom and comic book collection (you know the type). Needing a job and deciding to avoid the Fry Station route, he applies to a nearby institute in their Pain Research Department and is immediately assigned to drink a cup of Windex-colored liquid which promises to eliminate ALL PAIN! Too bad the boob chugs the entire gallon jug. Ooops! So what happens when he accidentally gashes his head open? No Pain? No problem! In fact, he's so fucking happy not to feel pain that soon he's leaping off his roof, face-down onto the driveway, for his neighbor's amusement. And it just keeps escalating to wonderfully ridiculous (and sick) proportions...Sure, it's a one joke film, but it's a GREAT joke—slickly executed with many cool directorial touches courtesy of Gore, with Barr giving a terrifyingly accurate portrait of fanboy dweebiness. Overall, a hearty shot of twisted humor for any viewer who's ever wanted to see a guy scrape off his own fingers with a cheese grater. Yeah! —Steve Puchalski



OVERSEXED RUGSUCKERS FROM MARS (1989). How could I resist a flick with a title like this? In hindsight though, I wish I had more self-control, especially with staggeringly unwatchable crapola like this. Though clocking in at only 85 minutes, it seems longer than SHOAH. Directed by Michael Paul Girard, it's a rotgut-level excuse for entertainment...Tiny naked aliens (animated through the wonders of Playdoh) set down on earth with a plan to mate humans with vacuum cleaners, starting with a homeless derelict who makes it with a stand-up vac (affectionately nicknamed Daisy). But the vacuum unexpectedly takes on a life of its own, strangling humans with its cord, and sucking all their blood out. And yes, it's all played for (nonexistent) laughs. Included is a tired 2001 parody, masturbation jokes, birdshit gags, and a level of humor that makes The Three Stooges look like Noel Coward. As for the characters? They're more like cardboard creeps. Dick Monda stars as the Hoover horny bum, Billybob Rhoads is a moronic murder suspect, Jean Stewart plays a slut with wardrobe from Fredericks of Hoboken, and its not often that a household appliance gives the best performance in a movie...See a man kissing a vacuum! See a guy going down on a clay figure! See a woman give birth to a cabbage patch dustbuster! See Steve toss this chunk o' shit into the recycle bin! —Steve Puchalski

SHADOWS IN THE CITY (1991). Director Ari Roussimoff had a hellish vision of solitude and despair. In fact he had a bunch of hellish visions—so he decided to toss them ALL into the same motion picture. This confused, ambitious production is the result. Utilizing some of the sleaziest, most desolate locales to be found in NYC, Roussimoff gives us a supernatural-tinged portrait of loneliness. Craig Smith stars as Paul Mills, an ex-freak show manager who's become a permanent barnacle on the underbelly of the city. Throughout the movie's fragmented framework, Paul goes about his daily routine (such as a seedy encounter with a prostitute, who gives the guy a hand job), as

his past comes back to haunt him. Most of this unflinching angst comes straight from Ari's heart, but it doesn't make for a very coherent movie, especially when he tosses in ghosts, zombies, bikers, sluts, and any other type of human flotsam he could conjure up in front of his camera. There are secluded moments of powerful loneliness, such as the image of Paul sitting on his mattress, crying and contemplating suicide as Christmas music bubbles away, but the film's old-hat pretensions continually dilute these moments of raw emotion...Ari recruited a sizable roster of underground figures to co-star as the ghosts from Paul's past, all filmed at some time or another and then spliced into the proceedings. Taylor Mead mugs into the lens as Paul's drunken pappy; Emile deAntonio is a (confused) mystic; geek performance artist Joe Coleman comes across with some convincing sneers; and Jack Smith (FLAMING CREATURES) is a Spirit of Death with fashion sense stolen from Maria Ousensky. Brinke Stevens also puts in a quick appearance as a fortune teller, and astoundingly enough, Brinke manages to keep her clothes on (a first for her, methinks). But silliest of all is porn queen Annie Sprinkle, who looks like she got liquored up on some cheap chablis, after which Ari took her up on a rooftop and filmed her shaking her garbonzas at the camera and masturbating around a chimney...Several segments are superbly filmed, such as the Fellini-on-Acid opening sequences at Coney Island; and the intense black and white photography gives the entire cast a creepy, weathered appearance. But my all around favorite portion is the grungy biker subplot, which is backed up by ol' pop tunes (a la Kenneth Anger's SCORPIO RISING). It's difficult not to laugh out loud when two yuppies are abused as "These Boots are Made For Walking" pounds away in the background—and Ari hired 100% Hell's Angels and their choppers for this segment (not some prettyboy actors straddling Japanese rice-rockets)...The ending takes a horrific bent when Paul succeeds with his death wish and finds himself trapped in a city of pasty-faced zombies (with the make-up looking a little too coincidentally like that from CARNIVAL OF SOULS), led by Nick Zedd as a rebellious walking corpse (hmmm, type-casting?). And one of the most amusing moments is when Paul stumbles into a Barroom of the Living Dead! I've seen some of those myself in the Lower East Side...The story is all over the map, the sledgehammer symbolism is often tiresome, and my biggest criticism against this self-proclaimed "epic" is its numbing length of nearly two full hours...Roussimoff promises that his next production will be the same type of unsparing glimpse into The Abyss, and this follow-up will also include a wrestling subplot! Oooh, I can't wait. —Steve Puchalski

TWILIGHT OF THE COCKROACHES a.k.a. GOKIBURI (1987). Here's more weirdness from those wacky Japanese, who seem to have cornered the modern market on imaginative high concepts. This one mixes live action with animation to give us a cockroach's view of life (and sitting in the front row of the Film Forum helped give us an additional roach-like perspective of the flick), with the cute little humanoid bugs animated against a background of actual furniture, filth and human beings. Narrated by Naomi, a 19-year-old roach, we're given a tour of her peaceful community, which lives amidst the leftover food and garbage of the unkept Mr. Saito. They happily boogie by the hundreds, while the apathetic Saito-san watches and the Elders relate tales of past combat with homo sapiens. Not happy enough to just lay by the pool (a.k.a. the bathtub) or feast off of dirty dishes, Naomi gets a taste of the outside world's brutality when she attempts to follow a stoic soldier from another tribe (actually, just the apartment next door), and sees how most roaches are mistreated by mankind. We're even greeted by armies of militaristic roaches lurking under the floorboards. But chaos ensues when Saito begins to date the woman next door, and she brings with her the terror of CLEANING SUPPLIES(!)—which leads to a full scale extermination when the couple decide to sanitize the pigsty apartment. The effect is occasionally chilling, often darkly hilarious, and packed with mass destruction, as we watch these two humans crushing their tiny invaders underfoot, in almost Godzilla-esque fashion. Happily, the finale (just barely) avoids easy sentiment with its dark edge...The animation is strictly routine, but it works well enough within the context of the story, as the characters roam before huge tableaux of trash and housewares. And one showstoppingly horrific highlight involves a visit inside of a Roach Motel. The film is also a bit protracted, with too much roach melodrama (such as Naomi's lovelife problems); and another minor problem is that I simply couldn't find much sympathy in my heart for a city of cockroaches. I guess that comes from living in NYC, where the reality is just a little too close to home...Nevertheless, this is a fascinating parable about survival and warfare with a demented slant. And one thing's for certain—this is the only film I've ever seen with a cameo appearance by a Talking Turd (honestly!). —Steve Puchalski



PHIL'S PARENTS HOUSE (1989) and ABNORMAL SALIVATION (1990; Home Format Video, 105 McCaul St. #506, Toronto, ONTARIO, M5T 2X4, Canada. \$24.95 apiece, checks payable to T. Graham). Yes folks, they're here! From the genius behind APOCALYPSE POOH (which I still think is the funniest damned thing in years) comes two news videos! Although neither can come close to the inspired dementia of his first outing, they're both packed with laughs...I caught the trailer for PHIL'S PARENTS HOUSE on the front of my copy of POOH, and thought it might be a joke. Not so! Phil Oakley takes us on a half-hour grand tour of his folks' suburban home, and boy, is it a spine-tingling excursion into the horrors of the mundane middle class! Phil toddles around the place, showing off his family's prized possessions (tools, washing machine, family portraits, et cetera), inspecting the well-stocked freezer, and even giving us a quick tour of his parents' single beds—as a muzak version of "Midnight at the Oasis" loops over and over in the background. It's all mind-numbingly inane, not to mention viciously hilarious. Starring Phil Oakley as himself, and introducing Springer...And if that wasn't enough (and it never is, is it?), ABNORMAL SALIVATION gives us the collected short works of T. Graham from 1987 to 1990. It's a mixed bag, but when the guy's on-target, watch out, especially when he takes 'found footage' and twists it for solid laughs—people's home videos, commercials, sports footage, whatever. There's a wonderful bit involving Fred Flintstone, Marlon Brando and Rocky Balboa. A demonstration of fly sucking. And I won't elaborate on the moment which had us roaring the loudest, but let's just say it involves Tracking Problems. Sure, a couple of the portions fall completely flat (most of them involving in-jokes with friends), but there's plenty to recommend and Graham's warped sensibilities are definitely in tune with SHOCK CINEMA's...It just goes to show you the wonders that the right technology, a little boredom and a lot of Canadian beer can accomplish. —Steve Puchalski

HARD ROCK ZOMBIES (1988). Judging from the music they play, they should have titled this one EASY LISTENING ZOMBIES. Thought this was gonna be a snoozer, but I actually ended up liking this piece of crap, probably because of the bizarre characters thrown over the edge by the actors' seriously inept performances. The plot involves a heavy metal band named Holy Moses (Holy Hosers, more like), mainly lame actors lousily lip synching even lamer music. The Moses hope to go national after a record company bigwig checks out their two shows in a small hick town named Grand Guignol (mmm...lots of heavy metal fans there). Well, the Guignolians are none too happy about this, especially Council Chairmen Red, Ted and Ed. They pass Resolution 6969, banning any music which "criticizes American foreign policy", effectively banning rock 'n' roll. Luckily for them, our beloved band members pick up this hitchhiker who likes to drown people while fucking them so her brother can take pictures while her father cuts the heads off chickens. At her house lie a multitude of weirdos—mom's a werewolf, the midget butler collects human hands, and while this butler turns out to be Herman Goering, dad is...you guessed it!...OL' HITLER HIMSELF!! (WOW!). Luckily the band manages to write a song that will raise the dead before being horribly murdered by the weirdo family (my favorite being death by killer weedeater!?!). If all this sounds pretty silly, it is, but it's almost sorta played for laughs. Everything's so inept in this movie it actually sort of works (until the zombie part when the band makes the gig and gets signed...good to know you can still sing after you're dead). Sort of funny, sort of cool and really horrible all at the same time. I liked it. But my brain hurts. —Steve Shapiro

BRIDE OF RE-ANIMATOR (1990). In answer to your first question: No, the sequel isn't as good as the original. How could it be? Even the original's director, Stuart Gordon, hasn't been able to match his premiere effort (with Gordon becoming sort of the Orson Welles of the horror genre, with RE-ANIMATOR his CITIZEN KANE and the studio-butchered FROM BEYOND his MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS). Well, this time around Gordon stepped down from the driver's seat and Brian Yuzna took over, with the male stars returning to their roles (Bruce Abbott, Jeffrey Combs, and even David Gale). The result is not only campier, but (if you can believe it) even bloodier and grosser than the first. Set eight months later, Doctors Herbert West and Dan Cain are working as war medics in Peru, where bodies for experimentation are plentiful. And by the time they return to illustrious ol' Miskatonic U., West has devised a new re-animation potion (using the amniotic fluid of an iguana) that not only returns life to dead corpses, but also gives life to the doc's own patchwork creations (for example, an adorable spider-like critter made of severed human fingers and an eyeball). So what's their first big project? Stealing assorted body parts during their day job at the hospital, and then stitching together the perfect woman in their basement lab. There are also plot-offshoots involving the severed head of the revengeful Dr. Hill, which is still mouthing off; a detective on Dr. West's trail; plus a psychiatric ward full of still-slobbering victims from West's first field day...As you can imagine, this is a film that really gives you confidence in the medical profession, and it's also a pretty good little romp with some very ingenious special effects—in particular, the Bride herself, which is an astounding creation of see-thru musculature (as well as nightgown). But it's nowhere near as sophisticated as the original was in tilting its hoary clichés or evoking Lovecraftian chills. The flick also lacks the first's erotic subtext (in part due to Barbara Crampton's absence, who was replaced by some Italian bimbo the producer was probably schtupping). Plus it's rather annoying to see how West has evolved into a sputtering, psychotic nerd...Though it has nothing particularly new to offer, it's still an outrageous, excessive dollop of horror. A worthy (albeit one-note) successor. —Steve Puchalski

SEX VS. GUNS (1990; Deathtrip Films, P.O.Box 1322, New York NY 10009). Richard Kern, the deviant director who gave the world such sunshiny, family favorites as SUBMIT TO ME and MANHATTAN LOVE SUICIDES, once again revels in raunch. But of all the hardcore indie filmmakers, he's certainly the most fascinating (not to mention watchable). He succeeds in capturing the sicko subculture of N.Y.C.—sorta like the Dian Fossey of the East Village—and years from now, when people doubt how insane-riddled the era was, we'll be glad Kern was there to document through it through his own warped sensibilities...SEX VS. GUNS tosses together four of his recent shorts. "King of Sex" has a leather-clad Nick Zedd wrestling a couple tarts in bed, and you get the feeling Kern simply filmed whatever transpired. Once again proving people will do anything if you point a camera at 'em... The one that had me squirming the most was "Pierce", in which a woman (Audrey Rose) gets her nipple pierced. Freezing her tit with an ice cube, she groans in pain as her piercer (Capt. Kirk) makes some wisecracks, and it's all captured in loving close-up for posterity. Difficult to watch without flinching, but that's the point methinks... "The Evil Cameraman" provides us with three profiles of femininity, as only Kern can spotlight it. One anorexic lass is stripped naked, a hood is put over her head, and her pubic hair cut off. A blonde in black bikini briefs is tied up like a hammock. And a third walks on her hands...All these are fine, if unexceptional, but the best is saved for last. "X is Y" has sexy femmes firing automatic weapons, with music provided by Cop Shoot Cop. Short yet hypnotic, it combines sexuality and violence into some wonderful images, such as a woman playing with bullets on her make-up table...Taken as a whole, you may ask yourself, "Is it Art?" Hardly. But Kern's work is unusually powerful. And though this package might give you the notion he simply likes to film women being violated, Kern's unapologetic vision includes both sexes getting happily abused. Some of his fans might even be disappointed since this video never reaches the heights of gory depravity his earlier freakshow work did, but Kern is trading intestines for insight this time around. Good for him. —Steve Puchalski

DARK INTRUDER (1965). I first came across this flick over 10 years ago, when I tracked down a 16mm print of it at a friend's request. It was well worth the effort. Originally conceived as a pilot for a torpedoed TV series entitled "Black Cloak", about an occult-oriented detective working in late 19th century San Francisco, the film transcends any expectations—especially when you see that Leslie Nielsen has the lead role of Brett Kingsford, a playboy/sleuth educated in the supernatural. With a house overflowing with mystical knick-knacks, a resourceful dwarf assistant Nicola at his beck and call, and a tongue firmly wedged in his cheek, the best way to describe this tale is "The Wild Wild West" meets H.P. Lovecraft...When a murderous fiend takes to the streets (leaving an ivory demon head at the scene of each crime), the baffled police call in Kingsford, who determines that a Sumarian demon is attempting a return to earth through the body of a human being. The killer is a chilling presence, always cloaked, with a hat obscuring his face and with big rubbery claws to slash up his enemies (O.K., so the make-up ain't so hot). And each murder provides yet another spoke on this demon's wheel to resurrection, with Nielsen wearing disguises and consulting a Chinese wiseman in effort stop this unnatural being. Oh, it comes off much better than it sounds, with director Harvey Hart (THE PYX) overloading the production with creepy atmospherics (on a limited budget), fascinating props (what I wouldn't give to have some of 'em in my living room), and loads of namedropping thanks to scriptwriter Barre Lyndon (THE WAR OF THE WORLDS). There's also a wonderfully imaginative wrap-up which goes beyond anything you'd expect. And for the trivia compilers, that's Werner Klemperer ("Hogan!!") providing the voice of Professor Malaki, a fortune teller...A slight but chilling surprise, and so perversely fascinating that it's no wonder the network never picked it up. —Steve Puchalski

WARLOCK (1990). Here's an early nomination for most laughable studio product of the decade. It's no surprise the flick's been sitting on a shelf for over a year—I couldn't stop giggling at it's nonstop foolishness. Director Steve Miner (*FRIDAY THE 13TH*, *SOUL MAN*) tries to upgrade his resume by hiring on two of England's finest young actors, Julian Sands (*GOTHIC*) and Richard E. Grant (*WITHNAIL AND I*), but still doesn't have a glimmer on how to make a flick with an I.Q. higher than a road bump...Sands stars in the title role, as a 17th century warlock who magically transports himself to 20th century America, and is followed (without any explanation given) by Grant as your friendly neighborhood Warlock Killer. Lori Singer (who was so superb in *FOOTLOOSE*—Ha!) co-stars as the link between the two time travellers—a modern day Valley Girl who first encounters Sands when he's tossed through her living room window and she takes him in without ever thinking of calling the cops. Grant then teams up with Singer (who spend much of the film covered in pounds of unconvincing old age latex) in a cross country search for Sands, who's trying to piece together his pop's (Satan's, that is) Bible, which will bring about the "uncreation" or mankind. Sands overplays (though it's difficult not to when the script requires you to bite out another guy's tongue, or concoct flying potions from the fat of a dead unbaptized child), and Grant barely survives with his dignity unshredded. Playing it completely straight, Grant is forced to utter stilted lines like "Let's tarry not"; wear an animal skin shirt for the entire film (which, if this film were real, would've smelled worse than a caked horse blanket); and lug an entire weather vane on his back (strange that it doesn't set off the metal detector when he boards a commercial jet). It claims to be based on true Satanic rituals, but when you've gotta contend with a cemetery set only a little less convincing than the one in *PLAN NINE*, all semblance of seriousness takes a sabbatical. Besides, worrying about logic would only slow down the flow of silliness, which is all this flick has going for it (like when Sands plays an evil Peter Pan by zipping through the air, accompanied by immense blue-screen lines). Also of mention is Mary Woronov's near-cameo as a metaphysical bookstore owner...A completely misguided project which gets its only points by avoiding boredom. Fast-paced and highly campy, but dumb, Dumb, DUMB. —Steve Puchalski

SEXTETTE (1977). How could any self-respecting, masochistic moviegoer pass up this item? I know I couldn't, even though I'd heard nothing but the most hair-raising rumors about it for years. Could it actually be tackier—more inane—more terrifying—than *MYRA BRECKINRIDGE*? Yep!...This was Mae West's final film, and she was still playing the vamp at the ripe ol' age (and when I say old, I mean OLD) of 85, as Marlo Manners, the ultimate sex symbol (maybe 65 years ago she could've stopped traffic, but now she has to settle for a clock). And while Mae and her latest hubbie (future James Bond, Timothy Dalton) lounge around their palatial honeymoon suite, Mae reminisces about her past



conquests while the roster of quick-buck guest stars stumble through. There's the always-confused Ringo Starr as a Stroheim-like director; George Hamilton (who was so good in *GODFATHER III*, he was virtually invisible) as a pinstriped gangster; Alice Cooper in a permed wig and tuxedo; Keith Moon as a foppy fashion designer; plus Dom DeLuise, George Raft, Regis Philbin, Rona Barrett—the list of has-beens and never-will-be's goes on and on. Meanwhile, the viewer gets to grind his/her teeth at the loose excuse for a plot, in which the U.S. government begs Mae to spend a night with one of her ex's, a Russian bigwig (Tony Curtis), in order to save diplomatic relations. The script moves furiously without one honest laugh, while betting its flurry of cameos and opulent sets will make audiences forget that underneath the veneer, this movie sucks!! But wait! Just when you think it's as cheesy as it could ever possibly get, the entire cast breaks into song and dance, and you remember it's also a fucking musical! You haven't lived 'til you've heard Mae and Dalton in a duet of "Love Will Keep Us Together". Or how about Dom DeLuise cranking out a cover of the Beatles' "Honey Pie"? And I bet you thought *AT LONG LAST LOVE* was interminable!...But to be honest, the most truly frightening aspect of the movie is watching Mae West toddle through the proceedings. She's so heavily cosmetized that she looks like a Wax Museum reject; she sounds like someone Drano-ed her voice box; and she can barely move because her bones are so brittle. You get the notion that one good wind would turn her into a pile of dust. When she visits the U.S.

Olympic Gymnast Team and wisecracks about their greased physiques, the athletes simply look embarrassed at having this worn-out ol' crone making lewd remarks. I felt sorriest for Timothy Dalton, who had to smooch with a woman old enough to be his grandmother, and just the thought of laying pipe to that pasty-faced bag o' bones could make any man's member shrivel and fall off...Based on a play by Mae, and directed with all the subtlety of a Super Bowl halftime program by Ken Hughes. The only good joke is an unintentional one: At the end Dalton turns out to be a British secret agent ("bigger than 007"). Talk about premonitions!...Distributed (barely) by Crown International. Even by their grim standards it's a disaster of epic proportions. —Steve Puchalski

BACK FROM THE DEAD VIDEO - Volume 1 (1990; Pat Hollis, LIVING COLOR PRODUCTIONS, 12 Pleasantview Ln., Circle Pines MN 55014; \$25 + \$3 postage). This quartet of so-called "educational" shorts from the past is a riot! A shovelful of dated, pro-Authority propaganda that'll have you laughing 'til you plotz! "The Pill Poppers" (1972) teaches us all about the evils of drugs (though the evils of the cast's '70s hairdos are ten times more terrifying). It's a hilarious scarefest starring a trio of misguided high schoolers. One begins by sniffing glue, moves up to pills, and then freaks out on a one way path to sanitarium-ville, complete with cool nightmares. Another gets addicted to downers by hanging out with unwashed hippie-types. And the last bonehead saves himself at the crucial moment. It's all wonderfully edited, with great montages and camera angles, and it's even more fun to watch if you're stoned...A look at family life in the future is provided, courtesy of the fuckheads at Ford, in "Year 1999 A.D." (1967). And boy, do they ever try to sucker us into believing technology is groovy! There'll be TV monitors to converse between rooms, instead of getting off your ass, walking ten feet, and having a face-to-face talk. Children can play computerized chess all by themselves (some fun, eh?). And Mom is still slaving in the kitchen, fixing push button meals. It's stunning in its wrong-headedness, because we all know the future's gonna suck, and no corporate swine is gonna convince us any different. But the film's wildly futuristic sets and saturated color schemes are incredible, thanks to "Willie" Zsigmond's photography. Wink Martindale stars as Dad, Alexander Scourby is our annoying narrator, and it's a wonderful chunk of cretinous crapola. If the future's gonna be like this in only eight years, get me the fuck outta here!..."Safety or Slaughter" (1965) is Canadian-lensed driving scare schlock, notable for its great clips of

accident victims and people pulled from wrecks. But though it's lurid in moments, the Canuck stiff posing as a narrator is a big bore, and it's definitely the weakest of the bunch...And we wrap up our brainwashing nonsense with "Caught in a Rip-Off" (1974), a supposedly-streetwise look at shoplifting. And since it promises a "no-crap" viewpoint, you can be sure it's completely full of shit. Featuring a kid caught by a hardware store guard, and a stunningly silly slo-mo finale. It makes McGruff the Crime Dog look subtle in comparison...All four of these are a bit of an overdose in one sitting, but how can you not love this nostalgic dose of cinemoronic? —Steve Puchalski

INVASION OF THE SAUCER MEN (1957). When it comes to '50s penny-ante schlock, this movie's at the top of my list. It runs through every cliché in the Guide to Drive-In Drivel, packs in the (sometimes intentional) laughs, and features those unforgettable Paul Blaisdell aliens—with their bulbous heads, half-pint height, and hypodermic fingernails. And it even co-stars avowed teetotaler Frank Gorshin (yeah, right!), long before his Riddler days and ensuing 25-year hangover...While out cruising for chicks, Gorshin spots a UFO landing in a field, but of course no one believes him. The government is busy covering up the fact, the sheriff thinks it's all a prank, and the horny teens are too busy smoochin' at Lover's Lane to notice the flying saucer. But the teens quickly get the message when they do a hit-and-run number on one of these extra-terrestrial midgets. Gorshin wants to store the goop-oozing carcass in his refrigerator (I hope he has plenty of baking soda to absorb the odors), but direct light makes the creatures go up in a puff of smoke. Meanwhile, a detached alien claw has gone off on its own killing spree, complete with a rubber eyeball on the back of it and fingernails which can inject alcohol into its victims (hey, now we understand why Frank signed on board!). But let's not forget the government subplot—because in typically half-assed fashion, the army dolts try to open the spaceship with welding torches and accidentally blow the thing up. Military intelligence? HA!...You've got it all here—misunderstood teens, closed-minded adults, and plenty of cheap thrills (like when one of the Saucer Men gets speared on the horns of an annoyed bull—right in its huge, bloodshot eyeball!). Director Edward L. Cahn really had a knack for these cheezy monsteramas (he also gave us IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE and CREATURE WITH THE ATOM BRAIN), and I had as much fun watching it now as I did when I first saw it as a li'l rugrat. —Steve Puchalski



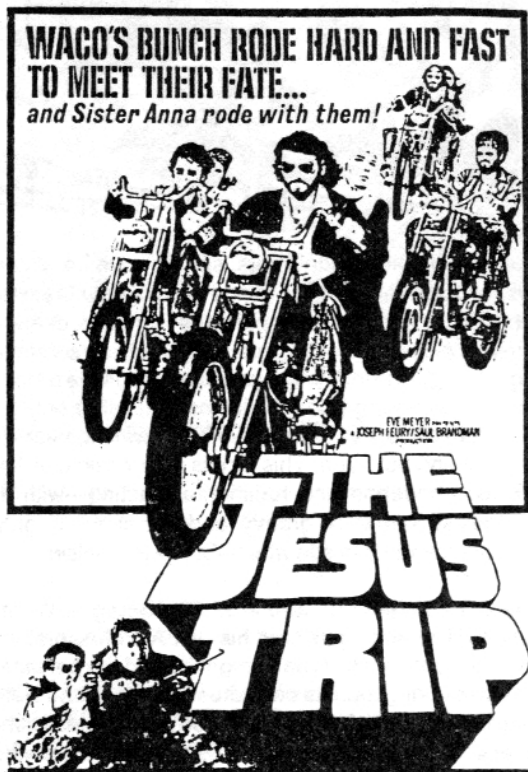
ALICE IN ACIDLAND (1968). This is a real rinky-dink time capsule, which takes the '60s nudie pic into the drug era by mixing a LSD subplot into the standard Trenchcoat Brigade baloney. And though the filmmakers tried to make the tale's Acid angle shocking, the audience (both then and now) will have more fun laughing at its crude, campy charms—as our pretty title character destroys all sense of morality under the influence of mind-wriving chemicals. Led astray by a worldly female French teacher, naive Alice starts by trying cigarettes, moves onto liquor, and finally men! And after getting a bubble bath at the hands of Miss Frenchie, Alice turns into a full-fledged hippie—tokin' joints, sportin' love beads and indulging in Free Love. Drugs turn her into a sexual "wildcat", but it's Acid that finally pushes her over the edge (since it make your brain feel like it's "held in the grip of a giant vice"), as Alice samples a dosed sugar cube during the finale. And it's at this point the film stock changes from black-and-white to COLOR! Far out! Send in the trippy backgrounds, red filters, nekkid models, strobe lights, and emulsion scratches (oops, I guess those weren't intentional). "Let me eat the colors! I can taste them!", Alice gushes, "I'm in love with everyone!" But in the process of opening her mind, she also loses it. And as a warning to any young folks out there who are thinking about hallucinogens, after only one orgasmic LSD trip, Alice goes completely insane and winds up a "mental vegetable" in a straightjacket. Damn, I've been waiting years for that to happen to me, but with no luck!...You can see that the Lewis Carroll-esque title is nothing but hype. This flick is your basic one-take sexploitative trash, from its canned score and obligatory flesh oogling, to misogynistic pandering and rudimentary acting—with the camerawork lingering so long and lovingly on bare skin you can count the pores. Plus it tries so hard to be groovy (and fails so thoroughly), it's pathetic. Nevertheless, I have a soft spot in my head for this kind of ridiculous, low-rent love-in. So sue me. —Steve Puchalski

ANIMAL ATTRACTION (1989; FILM THREAT Video, P.O. Box 3170, Los Angeles CA 90078-3170; \$20 + \$2.90 postage). What a stunningly demented idea! Better still, director George Cunningham pulls it off so beautifully! Presenting us (and his UCLA professors) with a mock-documentary which follows "60 Minutes"-style newsmen Frank Mamber, on his investigation into Tijuana nightlife and the persistent rumors of unorthodox sexual escapades. So welcome to the Casa de Hee Haw, where thrill-seeking tourists can actually sit back and watch a woman copulating with a donkey. "Thing are different South of the Border," explains one interviewee. And it's a wonderfully tasteless send-up of all those horrible investigative journalism shows—done with a superbly straight face. Mamber interviews tourists, residents, donkey stud services, the lead actress, and finally gives us what we've been waiting for, Dulla and King Ricardo on stage (of course, all the naughty bits are carefully concealed). Is it real, or is it simply staged for this movie? YOU'LL have to decide, if you're not too busy chuckling at the deadpan dramatics of Jerry Cerwonka as Mamber, who redefines the term Ugly American. Only 17 minutes long, but dead-on target and sure to offend. A good heaping of bad taste, as well the SPINAL TAP of donkey-fucking movies (and you don't run across those every day, do you?)! —Steve Puchalski

THE ORBITRONS (1990; Ghost Limb Films, P.O. Box 3066, Hoboken NJ 07030; \$14.95). This film from writer/director Christopher G. Frieri is a strange little hodgepodge. A 50 minute, black and white genre mutation peppered with laughs...Our lead character is a biker-type named Tom Kubash (Lawrence Talbot), who returns to the cemetery every year to relive his first masturbation. But this time around, while he's yankin' his kielbasa, Kubash witnesses an alien invasion from a planet where the men are thoughtful and peaceful, and the women are the militaristic ones. Starleatha (Diva Haase) is their platinum blonde leader, heaving her breasts at the screen (and with breasts like hers,

she can heave 'em anywhere she wants to, as far as I'm concerned) and showing off her array of virtually sprayed-on dominatrix wardrobe. The invaders have picked a cemetery for their ship's landing sight so they can reanimate the dead and use them for their army. Of course, that's just the central storyline, and Frieri tosses in some additional insanity just for kicks. Like a pair of lame-brained, misogynistic, Newark cops (and though I've never been to Newark, I get the feeling they're not so far from reality), and a shoestring bit of surrealism where Kubash dreams he's serving up bacon to the two bellowing, pig-snouted policemen. It's way out in left field! But that's what makes it so dementedly likable, not to mention the hyperactive performances (particularly Dave Lancet as Bizwad, the effeminate space male), good use of local rock 'n' roll music, and continuity problems that give it a PLAN NINE touch of inconsistency (such as when it goes from broad daylight to nighttime in only one splice)...It's a mixed bag, but with a high success rate. And for an early work it shows savvy on a decidedly sparse budget, and a great sense of evil humor. The ol' Vomited-on-by-the-Living-Dead sequence is alone worth a toast, and though there's a smattering of gore, the most painful image is a close-up of a syringe jabbing at the head of a penis. It kept my legs crossed for minutes...All in all, an enjoyable trek into twistedness. —Steve Puchalski

CULT PEOPLE (1990; Cine Philie Video, P.O.Box 2983, Beverly Hills, CA 90213; \$19.95). David Del Valle hosts this hour-long, eclectic collection of interviews with B-movie celebs and fringe filmmakers. Looking like they were cobbled together from a remedial cable access program, David nevertheless manages to rope in a fine line-up...There's Waris Hussein, the director of the original DR. WHO series; James Karen, star of FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE SPACE MONSTER; and Michael Sarne, who still is trying to convince us MYRA BRECKINRIDGE was ahead of its time (instead of just being a total piece of shit). Most of the guests seem to have a great time on the sparse little set, which is littered with memorabilia and one-sheets. And a trio of conversations stand out: Cameron Mitchell chuckles over his history of schlock, his over-abundance of rapist roles, and overflowing admiration of Mario Bava (who he worked with on half a dozen projects); Curtis Harrington provides us with tidbits on Dennis Hopper and NIGHT TIDE; and Patrick Macnee comes across with wonderful anecdotes and a generous spirit, as he speeds through his lengthy career, deceased pals and THE AVENGERS without a moment to catch his breath...Most of the guests are fascinating, but it would help if Del Valle could've dug up a few film clips to liven up the visuals. The other fault with the package is that it's just TOO DAMNED SHORT! Just when an interview begins to go into any real depth, it move onto someone else, and some of the guests get less time than they would during a Tonight Show gig. The most glaring case in point is with Russ Meyer, who's given less than ten minutes to sum up his entire randy career...Del Valle certainly appreciates his guests' place in celluloid history and has a great rapport with them, plus it's good to see any type of tape like this on the market. But it only wet my appetite for a more thorough job. —Steve Puchalski



THE JESUS TRIP (1971). The best thing about this flick is its hilarious ad. How I wished it had lived up to it! You see, I love all those ol' bikeramas with their anti-social, morally-reprehensible, and just plain grubby behavior. But this is definitely a low-energy outing from the last gasp days of a dying genre. It's deadeningly paced, gloomily shot, and just plain wimpy at its core, without even the high energy starpower of a Bruce Dern or William Smith...This snooze-a-thon begins when half-a-dozen dirt-caked bikers on the lam from the fuzz decide to stop at a convenient convent to hide. Young Sister Anna (Tippy Walker) helps them elude a revenge-crazed cop (Billy "Green" Bush), so to repay her kindness, the boys kidnap the semi-willing nunette and show her the lifestyle of the road, with their leader Waco (Robert Porter) as her tour guide. Well, the big problem about all this is WHERE'S THE BLOODY ACTION?! All these characters do is gab throughout the middle reels of the film, and you'll be praying one of 'em will start a rumble—or maybe just mildly annoy someone else. No luck. It's one of the only bikerfests that would make a Robert Bresson film look visceral in comparison. And for all you degenerates who are wondering: No, Sister Anna is never gangbanged or even manhandled by these goons. And the non-excitement reaches its peak when the guys have to catch a chicken for dinner. Hell, these cycle jerks aren't even real villains, since we learn they were actually set up by some drug smugglers who secretly stashed heroin in their bikes. Sure, you could excuse all this tedium if any of the cast were worth watching, but most of the actors are interchangeable and instantly forgettable, and Russ Mayberry's non-direction would be better suited to an Eastern bloc soap opera. Luckily, Billy "Green" Bush pops back up for the finale as the vigilante cop who's more vile than the bikers (I especially enjoyed the way Billy buries one guy up to his neck in the sand and then threatens to give him a tire-tread complexion), but even his nihilistic escapades can't save it from a raspberry-inducing ending...Tame, lame and strictly PG level. The biker movie equivalent of Non-Alcoholic Beer. Sure, it may look the same, but there's nothing in it. So what's the point? —Steve Puchalski

ALLIGATOREYES (Academy Home Video; 1991). It begins simple enough. A trio of old friends—Lance, Marjorie and Robbie—head south on a rural road trip, when they pick up Pauline, a beautiful young woman who's hitchhiking. And their pretty passenger is so at ease the trio doesn't even realize she's blind until hours into their journey. Sounds a bit like some cheap soap opera? Give it time, because it slowly evolves into a shaggy dog psychological chiller—similar to a pulp novel crammed with mystery, sex and mind games. Though any normal people might wonder what a blind woman was doing on her own in the middle of nowhere, these questions are quickly forgotten when Pauline turns on her charms and begin tempting the two men. After spending a night with Robbie, she sets her sights (or lack of sight) on Lance, and begins playing them off each other. What exactly is Pauline planning? It's all slowly unravelled as is Pauline's past (i.e. exactly how she was blinded as a child), while she leads them on a quirky trek into the Carolina wilderness. What I admired about the script is that every time I feared the film was going soft and sentimental, it recovers when another layer of Pauline's personality is exposed...At first the characters seemed

difficult to like, since all they seem to do is bicker, whine and backstab at every possible moment—but after a while you realize that's what makes them just like real human beings. And riding above them all is Pauline's finely etched character, with the sublime Annabelle Larsen bringing her dark complexity and sensuality to vivid life—manipulating everyone with her so-called handicap, while proving to be capable than anyone else around her (especially with a gat). The film as a whole is nothing startling, but Ms. Larsen's performance certainly is. Kudos to director/writer John Feldman for creating a small, unassuming little puzzle which moves in fits, but certainly holds your interest. —Steve Puchalski

A MAN CALLED...RAINBO (1988; Section Eight Video, P.O. Box 931897, Hollywood, CA 90093). I didn't have the sheer stupidity to waste \$7.50 on Sylvester Stallone's latest comic odyssey, OSCAR. Instead, if you want to laugh at (not "with") Sly, I'd advise you to invest your cash in this silly little item which was perpetrated by producer Jeffrey Hilton. Just as Woody Allen re-dubbed a Japanese spy flick to hilarious results in WHAT'S UP, TIGER LILY?, Hilton bought up the rights to an absolutely abysmal turd from Stallone's pre-ROCKY years (not to be confused with all his absolutely abysmal turds from his post-ROCKY years), entitled REBEL (a.k.a. NO PLACE TO HIDE). Then he re-edited it, added new footage, and tossed in a whole new soundtrack. The video box promises "the funniest film since THE EXORCIST",

and though some bits are brilliant, at 90 minutes it's far too long. And in too many cases it goes for crude gags instead of razored wit. In any case, it's great to see Sly looking like such a dope, and a pack of ingenious filmmakers taking advantage of it...Stallone plays a Vietnam deserter turned flower child—complete with floppy hat, stringy hair, a rug-like dashiki, and an empty-headed expression drippin' off his fat face. He meets up with a carload of hippie revolutionaries, but before he can "poke" the women, he has to prove his loyalty by helping start World War III by putting flaming sacks of dog shit on the front steps of the Russian and Chinese embassies. Subplots involve Inspector Forskin of the F.B.I.; a black revolutionary who's actually a government infiltration robot; a romance between Sly and a transsexual; a shoe-fetished Richard Nixon making obscene phone calls; plus lots of butt-ugly actors in hippie threads, overdubbed by grating-voiced comic-wannabees. Got the point yet? This thing is a MESS! You know you're in trouble when poop-covered platform shoes are a major plot device. And personally, I think they could've been a lot more vicious to Sly (and if they'd ever had to suffer through OVER THE TOP, I'm sure they would've been). There are many inspired moments, but you have to wade through lots of lame Cootie jokes to get to them. —Steve Puchalski



ARISE! The SubGenius Video (1989; The SubGenius Foundation, P.O. Box 140306, Dallas, TX 75214; \$39.95). My advice is to immediately pop this video into your VCR every morning, just to get your minimum daily requirement of Slack. Because from The Only True Crusade comes this 80 minute brain barrage that'll help you tune in, turn on, and spit up. And in case your mind has been on hold for the past decade, here is the Church of the SubGenius in all its rumpled glory, in easy to ingest visual doses. A non-stop blast of Gospel, in the form of old film clips, docu-footage, animation, computer graphics, artwork, and narration that promises to make sense of all it (that's IF you carry the rare SubGenius gene, of course). From the first and only religion to condone free thought and pure anarchy (why do you think so many of us embrace it?), this video

is a funnel to guide the tide of Slack into a focused stream, straight into your pitiable lives. Confused? Get MORE confused, because the rest of the world already is, and you don't want to be left behind, do you? Filled with mind-softening visuals and twisted montages, interviews, clips from old SubGenius conclaves, and even the lilting "Ballad of Bob Dobbs", this tape was years in the making. So get wisdom. Get suckered. Get "Bob"! NOW!! —Steve Puchalski

NUDITY REQUIRED (1988), HELLBENT (1988) and BODY PARTS (1990). Here are three recent releases from the groovy folks at Rae Don Home Video. Features that never saw the light of a movie projector, premiering instead at all the finest video bodagags across NYC. But with a title like NUDITY REQUIRED, what do you expect? It sounds like one of those four in the morning pay-cable atrocities—and if only it were as entertaining. The plot involves two irritating surfer duds, er, dudes named Scammer and Buddy who accidentally acquire a palatial beach house, pose as sleazy movie producers in order to initiate some Casting Couch action, find themselves chased by a revengeful Mexican (the brother of some chick they knocked up), and get involved with both The Mob and Soviet diplomats. Through some creaky coincidences, the guys actually get a movie in the can (the final product resembling one of Fred Olen Ray's early works), and I counted only one laugh in the entire flick (and that was a hit man in a giant taco suit, so I'm not talking Lubitsch here). Director John Bowen delivers lots of uncovered breast action, as promised, but nothing could save this stunningly insipid flop. Not even rubbery looking guest star Julie Newmar who, now that she's well past the half-century mark, should retire that vamp act before it gets any more pathetic...Richard Casey's HELLBENT is a step up on the technical side, if not in entertainment value. It's a protracted hodgepodge of low-rent Satanic cliches and the ol' Faust routine. Phil Ward stars as banal punk singer Lemmie, who's approached by a mysterious agent named Tanas with an offer of fame and fortune (though with songs like "Van Gogh's Ear", it's no surprise the guy's unknown). So Lemmie signs away his soul, and crawls inside a liquor bottle when the success gets too much for him to handle. Be prepared for lots of nickel-and-dime dramatics, like tension within his band, plus the realization that his girlfriend Angel (pretty subtle there, Mr. Scriptwriter!) is the only one who really cares. Elsewhere across town, Tanas' thugs are killing off anyone who tries to default on their deal, and Lemmie becomes the next in line. Considering its budget, some of the nightclub scenes are rather nifty (in particular the Tanas-owned club, Bar Sinister), but the plot is slow and the characters uninvolved. At least it achieves one wonderfully absurd laugh, when in mid-chase a battered and bloody Lemmie suddenly stumbles into a class on Performance Art, and is taken to be the guest lecturer. The entire cast is "Introduced" (no surprise), and it's all dead dull...Luckily, in our final feature, BODY PARTS, director Michael Paul Girard proves he really knows how to give the public what they came for. The credits haven't even finished and already we've got half a dozen strippers showing off their wares, with all of them turning up dead in rapid fire succession. And when the police investigate they find a videotape the killer made as he sliced 'em up. Girard's STRIPPED TO KILL-style

plot is nothing new, and he knows it, so he packs the film with good looking bimbos, strange supporting characters, and an overdose of cheap put-ons and gags. If some of 'em, fall flat, who cares? There's another's lurking on the next page of the script. And if by chance a character begins to talk too much, Girard cuts back to a stripper in a g-string doing splits on stage, just to keep our attention from wandering. And it works. The head detective (Dick Monda) slops down fries and ketchup while viewing the butchery, falls in love with a Marilyn Monroe wannabee stripper (their bedroom scene comes complete with "Bolero"-esque music and a bubble machine), and even consults a psychic who (after picking up psychic vibrations by sniffing a pair of panties) informs him the culprit is a 2000 year old Egyptian spirit. There are also dildo jokes, a dog enjoys the taste of women (you can guess where), a chase-on-foot where they have to slow down in order to avoid piles of dog shit, and more. It's all so overwhelmingly dumb it's wonderful, and they even manage to tie up the plot amidst all this silliness. Crude and scattershot, but along with his earlier feature *OVERSEXED RUGSUCKERS FROM MARS*, Michael Paul Girard is quickly becoming a mini-legend of no-budget grime. —Steve Puchalski

A MAN LIKE EVA (1983; Cinevista). This German-lensed production is definitely pretty warped. How could it not be when it's essentially a slice-of-life biopic on Rainer Werner Fassbinder, one of the most eccentric (to put it mildly) and indulgent (to put it nicely) directors to emerge from post-WWII Germany? To make matters even stranger, the lead is played completely in drag by actress Eva Mattes, who's primarily known for her roles in Fassbinder films such as *JAIL BAIT*. Sure, details might be rewritten a bit and the lead may be renamed Eva for this excursion, but it's Rainer through and through. Decked out in his usual crumpled fedora, dark glasses and scraggly beard, she's utterly unrecognizable—and she's so good that after awhile you tend to forget the distaff reality...The story is set at a large communal mansion, in which Eva and his entourage of actors are filming a low-budget, high-chaos adaptation of "A Doll's House". And when the cameras are off, the viewer gets to sit in on all their emotional upheavals, money problems and a director who manipulates them like pawns. At one point Eva even forces one actress to strip and crawl for the camera. It's not a very flattering portrait of Fassbinder, but since Ms. Mattes worked with him, you assume it's a deadly accurate glimpse into his personality and working style (plus most of it's backed up by *LOVE IS COLDER THAN DEATH*, the wonderfully whacked bio by Robert Katz). The film tries to capture Rainer's obsessions with his actors—wanting not only their talent, but their bodies as well—with the homosexual sequences having an additional layer of complexity since we have a woman playing a man making love to another man). Primarily though, we watch him suffering for his Art (you can tell he's suffering because he takes showers with his clothes on and shuffles around the house looking dour and intense) and like much of Fassbinder's own work, boiling emotions eventually lead to tragedy, with heartbreak and death going hand in hand...Besides being a cinematic genius, Fassbinder could be dull, pretentious and annoying—and unfortunately the film has identical faults, which makes it difficult viewing to say the least. Director Radu Gabrea isn't up to the complexity of his task, and the production is a mess of stilted drama, absurd humor and everyday monotony, with dramatics so intense they veer into the laughable range. The film is at its best when Eva is baiting his actors, and Eva Mattes is absolutely brilliant in displaying his tortured complexity, but it's still just a scattershot second-generation of reality. Fascinating if you're a Fassbinder fanatic, but rough going for anyone else. —Steve Puchalski

DEATH SPA (1990; MPI Home Video). After suffering through this assembly-line product I realized that nowadays any High Concept can get turned into a slice 'n' dice delight. I can just imagine the Money Men sitting around a conference table: "Where can we slaughter gorgeous models this time around?" "How about a health spa? That way we can stick 'em in leotards and have 'em take lots of showers!" "Yeah, those boneheaded moviegoers will eat it up!" And so another waste of celluloid was born...For the record: A supernatural force has inhabited the Starbody Health Spa, your typical pastel yuppie farm. The automatic equipment soon goes haywire, the sauna oozes chlorine gas, tiles fly off the walls like frisbees, and we learn that the culprit is the owner's dead wife, who immolated herself for being wheelchair (who should I say "wheelcharred"?). A parapsychologist is called in to battle the spook, a blind girl is recruited for some cheap terrorizing, and the end is a *CARRIE*-esque massacre featuring assorted face-rendings. Yes, it's pretty derivative stuff (I suggested renaming it *THE LEGEND OF HEALTH HOUSE*), and I'm pretty fucking tired of this formula, which puts logic on extended holiday. Director Michael Frisica dribbles on the gore for the unrated cut, and the actors trapped in this mess include Merritt Buttrick, Rosalind Cash, and the gorehound's answer to Jim Brown, Ken Foree. Hell, this schlock doesn't deserve any more of my time (or yours). —Steve Puchalski

THE GUN IS LOADED (1988; Mystic Fire Video). If Spaulding Grey or Eric Bogosian can get away with one-person shows, why not Lydia Lunch, the Attitude Queen of the East Village? Fans of her earlier film work (such as *FINGERED*) should be warned that this time around Lydia gets serious. Instead of getting an on-screen buttfuck, she uses this showcase to vent her political, social and scatological beliefs, and it's good to know she's got half a brain to back up her previous sleaze antics. "It's all about getting fucked," begins her hit-and-miss quest for the truth, which is basically a filmed record of a performance art piece. It starts on some strong notes, such as when Lydia relates tales of her curdled, white-picket-fence childhood, complete with a Bible salesman father and boiled chicken. But after awhile it becomes simply a vehicle for her frustrations and hatred of the entire rancid world, while taking pot shots at easy targets. She informs us the government "lies through its teeth" (gosh, I could've told you that); that when it comes to succeeding in this hellhole "It's not who you know, it's who you blow"; and primarily the fact SHE'S alive and the rest of us poor bastards are dead. Talking straight into the camera, she puts on the belligerent bitch posture (which is so fucking trendy nowadays) and unleashes her torrent of abuse at the audience. My only question: Are we supposed to be laughing at this dose of self-indulgent venom? I hope so, because I was...There's tight, smooth filmmaking on display from directors Merrill Aldighieri and Joe Tripician, and some good back alleyway locations, but it takes a back seat to Lydia's pompous monologue, which by the end pegs her as just another dissatisfied victim of the planet earth...Don't get me wrong. I admire the woman for her solid convictions and drive, but the biggest fans of this flick will be black leather poseurs who want to be just like her. I think Lydia should lighten up, have a few drinks, and if she feels the need to whine without any constructive answers, put a cork in it please. —Steve Puchalski

CLASS OF NUKE 'EM HIGH PART 2: SUBHUMANOID MELTDOWN (1991; Troma). This flick is strident, inept and stupid. In other words, it's a pretty typical Troma release, as well as being about as good as the original (which I'm still valiantly trying to forget). Though you have shake your head in bewilderment when you realize it took six scriptwriters to crank out this nuclear no-brainer. That breaks down to about one successful joke per writer...Our setting is the Tromaville Institute of Technology, where the gas-masked student body is comprised of peabrain punkers with a tendency toward violence, beach bunnies exhibiting the teeniest wardrobes on record, and the lowest combined

IQ of any cast in recent memory. Worst of all, the evil Nukarama Corporation (whose atomic silos overshadow the campus) is infiltrating the school with a race of subhumanoids—emotionless superhumans with an extra mouth where their navel should be. Unfortunately, these subhumanoids aren't very stable, and tend to melt down into puddles of blue and green goo and then give birth to a hairy madball. Our hero is Roger Smith (Brick Bronsky), a reporter for the Tromaville Times (whose b.o. problem provides several dozen lame jokes) who first uncovers the conspiracy, while falling in love with a beautiful blond subhumanoid. It's certainly a silly mishmash of over-baked gags, and director Eric Louzil tries to cover up that fact that most of them are misfires by keeping a whirlwind pace and an eardrum-pounding decibel level. It doesn't work in the least, and the whole project quickly gets grating. All flash and no fun, like being bashed in the head with a sledgehammer. At least the ending has a glimmer of excitement, when an innocent squirrel chews on some nuclear ooze and turns into Squirrel-zilla (!), a giant mutant monster which does some extremely unconvincing building-crushing. Never one to waste money on trivial matters like special effects (they don't even attempt to conceal the strings holding up the flying madballs) or legitimate actors (not that any would come within a mile of this sad excuse for a screenplay), Troma instead gives us a full quota of puke 'n' tits 'n' cartoony characters, such as Lisa Gaye and her Marge Simpson-sized beehive. Basically this is just overwrought, witless crap that follows the "anything goes" school of filmmaking—straight into the toilet. —Steve Puchalski

SLEEPOVER MASSACRE (1989; W.A.V.E. Productions, R.D. #4, Box 207, Centerton, NJ 08318). What exactly is WAVE Productions? A few movie-raking folks with a video camera, who've set up a company which takes your horror screenplay (not to mention your cash—they estimate it at \$15 per minute, not including the cost of props and special effects), and puts it on film, using their equipment and performers. Yeah, it sounded pretty fishy to me too, and after getting a look at their self-described "finest" product, I got the full picture. And unfortunately, they only had the PG-13 version of the film for preview because "their tape broke". Professionals? Not in a zillion years...The story has a few female ex-roommates reuniting for a nostalgic weekend in the country. But who would've guessed there'd be a coffin in the basement of their bungalow, complete with a female vampire? So while the characters sit about and babble (they do that a hell of a lot), one by one they get ripped apart while the vampiress gets more and more human after each demise. Who will survive? Who gives a fuck?! I've found more thrills in getting stoned and staring at my big toe. And you should ask yourself, do you really want to watch a bunch of overweight chicks with troweled on make-up? How about men with hairy backs and Bob Hoskins physiques? Geesh, if I want to see pale pot bellies, I'll simply go to the Coney Island boardwalk in the summertime. The make-up and transformation effects are pure shit, the gore is adequate, and the squalid sets look surprisingly realistic (since it was probably all filmed in their own homes). It's the type of flick where if they need a stone wall, they'll attempt to paint one as a backdrop...I can sorta imagine the enticement of having your words put on to the screen (or rather, the picture tube), but I'd prefer to use filmmakers who could at least get their shots to match. In addition, it has that cheezy shot-on-video discoloration to make it a complete visual eyesore. The writer/director was Gary Whitson, but in a couple years, after he's gotten a real career, I'm sure he'll deny having anything to do with it. (Sample tapes, such as this one, are \$25 apiece—but if you still haven't gotten the point, they aren't worth it.) —Steve Puchalski

KUNG FU ZOMBIE (1981). When you need examples of cinematic martial arts at their finest, you should think of Bruce Lee or Jackie Chan. This Asian import, on the other hand, is the perfect example of Dumb Fu—the type of action pic where everyone leaps 20 feet in the air, the fights are fast forwarded to the point of laughter, and the dialogue consists of "Yeeaaawwhh!", "Eeiaahhah!" and the ever popular "Heeeiaah!". Plus this item also mixes in cool supernatural elements and goofy slapstick. The end result makes no sense whatsoever, but the viewer doesn't really give a shit since it also never gives you a moment to breathe! It's 90 minutes of non-stop pummeling. THE EVIL DEAD of kung fu movies, with all the sophistication of any good Three Stooges short. It begins when a spastic priest with cymbals on his hands brings the dead back to life, and they leap outta their coffins like they've got rats in their underpants, with faces like 5 pounds of rotten pork. The gist of the plot involves the ghost of some vengeful shithel (sort of a villainous Chinese TOPPER) who's searching for a body to inhabit. Once he finds a suitable victim, the wacky priest has to literally nail the spirit in (a pretty funny image), and by coincidence the host body happens to be the father of the film's young hero. Sounds convoluted? Absolutely! There's a vampire, an exorcism, dog-eating gags, comic relief by having a guy bounce off a fat lady's chest, dubious dubbing, and best of all, those ever-lovin' Kung Fu Zombies, who pop out of the ground like slices of toast. So get ready for chopsocky 'til you crap! And the last ten minutes is the most stunningly wild-assed kung fu finale in recent memory. It never lets up until the film stock runs out! This type of garbage doesn't get any better! Directed by Hwa I. Hung and starring a busload of interchangeable kung fools. —Steve Puchalski



METAMORPHOSIS: THE ALIEN FACTOR (1990). Well, look what we've stumbled upon! A good, scary, low-budget horrorfest that works nearly 100% of the time! That's a rarity in this day and age. Add some absolutely eye-popping creature f/x and you've got one of the best new genre releases. Too bad it's never actually gotten an official release (I first saw it back in August '90, and I guess it's still lingering on someone's shelf in May). Originally conceived as a sequel to cheap-shock fave THE DEADLY SPAWN, this film stands proudly on its own demented charms. An intriguing flashback structure tells us the story of a genetic research lab handling alien cell tissues. One scientist is bitten by a test subject and the foreign cells begin to mutate his entire body in FLY-like ways. The story branches off into several different directions, but eventually weaves itself into a chase through the complex, with everyone in the cast pursued by the quickly-growing, extremely toothy creature. The script is kept fresh with a fragmented structure and the filmmakers certainly know how to manipulate the plot for maximum suspense (not

to mention goopy repugnance) by potholing the narrative with surprises. Above all, there's a truly unforgettable monster at center stage. But what most impressed me was the fact that amidst all this hardware and carnage, the characters manage to remain full-blooded, with strong female leads at the forefront, such as a brilliant scientist and two daughters in search of their missing father...I can't really think of anything negative to say about this movie (is this a first?). It's a solid rollercoaster ride and a true crowdpleaser. —Steve Puchalski

VAMPYRE (1990). Is this low-budget feature an art film? Or a horror film? No luck on either behalf, though it wants to straddle both bases at the same time. Instead it's just a big bore, despite the stylish initial idea of remaking Dreyer's *VAMPYR*. I've got to admire director Bruce Hallenbeck for going after the big game instead of opting for cheap gore, but nevertheless, the result is just cliché after cliché, pocked with half-baked surrealism. Set in some nebulous time period, a rural village is besieged by vampires and a mysterious stranger (in a J.C. Penney's suit and tie) appears out of nowhere to save the town. Filmed in Upstate New York, the film goes for a dreamlike look which backfires by simply looking chintzy. The entire stilted cast recites their dialogue like they were overdosing on horse tranquilizers. The not-at-all-special effects got laughs from the viewers. And it'd take 40,000 volts to give this piecemeal flick any true life. The only portion of this snoozer that kept me awake was the sight of the evil vampiress, who runs about with her top off...I don't like ripping apart independently made productions (because we need all the new filmmakers we can get), but 90% of the freebie audience I saw this movie with had walked out by midpoint. It's a true wristwatch-checker. —Steve Puchalski

PLEASE DON'T EAT MY MOTHER (1972). Cruel and Unusual Punishment in the form of a movie? Yes, it's certainly possible, especially after suffering through this sexploitation update of Corman's *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*, lensed long before the stage musical made it popular with the masses. This thoroughly sleazy number features a dumpy voyeur named Henry Fudd, who spends his lunch hours peeping on two young lovers who're constantly fondling in their car. One day he buys a strange talking plant from a flaming florist, takes it back to



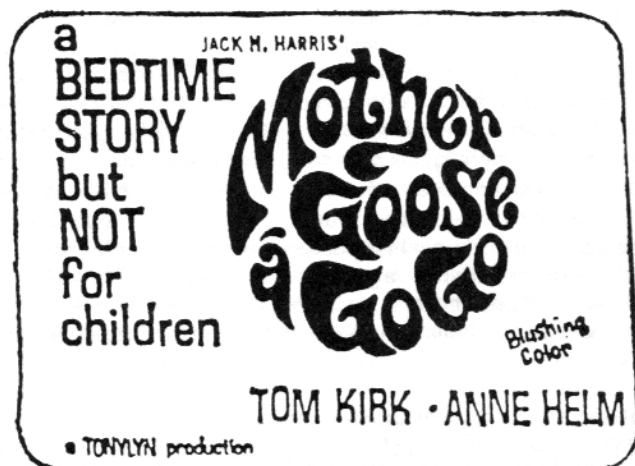
his suburban home and ratbag mother, and play amateur horny-culturalist with his femme-voiced flora, which look like a cross between a sick Venus Flytrap and a sock puppet. Fudd begins by feeding it flies, then moves onto dogs, then finally people. After fulfilling the title's promise (burp!), Henry begins to lure prostitutes home for dinner, and soon this loathsome idiot begins to get turned on by his now giant plant (which he calls Eve). So ask yourself, do you REALLY want to see a middle-aged geek trying to hump a big plastic house plant? And throughout the film, director Carl Monson (now THERE'S a name to forget!) cuts back to that car-bound couple who're always in mid-humping...The star, Bud Kartalian, is a repulsive little toad of a man, and we get a full dose of his slobbering as he plays peeping tom. Punctuated with relatively graphic sex scenes (enough to get it an X-rating) and unfunny gay gags, this isn't even masochistically entertaining. The only thing I liked about it were the surrealist atrocious sets, which combines garish color schemes and tacky patterns to an almost John Waters-type level. Co-starring Renee Bond, this is a particularly virulent turd in the form of a movie. —Steve Puchalski

DR. CALIGARI (1990). If you saw the last edition of *SHOCK CINEMA*, you might remember how much I loved *CAFE FLESH*. Well, the folks behind that bizarre brainchild are back with more cash, more vibrant visuals, and (alas) less of a

storyline. Still, it's one of the most colorful, trippiest flicks to hit screens in awhile, and even if its underground trendiness left me utterly cold, you can't help but admire the Technique Overdose...Welcome to Dr. Caligari's Insane Asylum, though this time around the doc is a femme fatale vamp (the granddaughter of the original) poured into a sleek yellow dress. She gets her kicks from performing extreme experiments on her psychotic patients—promising to heal their minds, at the expense of their bodies. She pulls these people into her nightmarish world (a combination of Tim Burton at his darkest, and "Porky in Wackylant") and transforms them with brain injections of hypothalamus fluid and gland transplants. Some of her 'successes' include Mr. Pratt, who killed a kindergarten teacher and then stewed her up, and Mrs. VanHouton, who hallucinates about giant tongues and oozing orifices...I can't fault the look of the film. The sets are as dazzlingly surreal as its namesake's, and several images are utterly fantastic (such as a cake filled with throbbing flesh and tentacles), but under its surface, there's absolutely nothing there. In trying to be the Ultimate In Cult, director Stephen Sayadian forgot little things like human emotion and an anchor in reality, so it isn't simply Style Without Substance. Just imagine the stage pieces of *CAFE FLESH* pulled to feature film length, but without the human dimensions to make it more than a freak show...Starring Madeleine Reynal as Dr. C and Fox Harris as Dr. Aval, this film may be a visual wetdream of amazing sets and vibrant colors, but under all the beauty is emptiness. Let's hope Sayadian is pulls it back together for his upcoming *CAFE FLESH* sequels (yep, he signed to do both PART 2 and 3!) — Steve Puchalski

STRANGEST DREAMS: INVASION OF THE SPACE PREACHERS (1990; Troma). Troma has a fondness for acquiring these low-budget genre mutations—films that mix together a little flesh, a little gore and lotsa humor (just in case the story stinks). In this case, they latched onto a small-scale winner from West Virginia-based filmmaker Daniel Boyd (*CHILLERS*). It's a clever little hodgepodge that moves along at a nice clip and is crammed with terrific sidelines. The story involves two middle class doofs (an accountant and a dentist) who decide to go camping in order to escape their dreary lives. Renting a "chalet" (which makes Dogpatch's lifestyle seem prosperous), it begins as Yuppies in Rural Hell, and changes gears when they discover an injured space alien and hide it in their barn. At first the two dolts are wary of the scaly extraterrestrial, but when it changes into a blond beauty, their tune quickly changes and they listen to "her" warning. You see, it seems that their camping weekend coincides with an alien invasion, led by Reverend Lash—a humanoid preacher who uses a hypnotic radio show to turn listeners into mindless zombies (Religious zombies? Here? Gosh, that's a stretch of the imagination!). And this trio has to save the earth (if the dentist doesn't spend all his time trying to bed down Miss Alien Bimbo)...It's a pleasant little plot, but Boyd score most of his points by sneaking in inspired sight gags (like the Amazing House of Dung), winning supporting characters (i.e. Johnny Angel, a rockabilly star who

just happens along with a tank-topped cutie on each hip), and oddball situations (such as when our nominal heroes are kidnapped by a hippie commune). The cast is fine, with special mention going to beautiful Eliska Hahn as Nova and John Riggs as the super-cool Angel. Filled with fresh ideas and a winning, anything-goes style, **STRANGEST DREAMS** is a pleasant surprise. —Steve Puchalski



MOTHER GOOSE A GO-GO a.k.a. UNKISSED BRIDE (1967). Poor Tommy Kirk. Another child actor who went to pot (literally) when he reached adulthood. From **OLD YELLER** to old stinkers, like **ZONTAR, THE THING FROM VENUS**. This is (believe it or not) one of his best—a cringeable sex comedy with hallucinogenic highlights, and a title song (yes, they somehow concocted lyrics around that title!) warbled by Kirk himself! It's a solid mess of horrendous filmmaking (courtesy of director/writer Jack Harris) and groovy late-'60s clichés...It begins when a pair of clean-cut young newlyweds finally get to the bedroom, only to discover the hubby (Tommy) has a bizarre psychological problem. When his bride begins reading from a book of Mother Goose stories (a typical activity for a wedding night, right?), Tommy goes stiff as a two-by-four and passes out. A sexy female headshrinker is called in to save the day, by administering a "harmless psychedelic drug" (in a spray bottle, no less!) to the guy, who then has trippy visions of Mother Goose characters coming to life. What a whacked concept! And all the hallucinations look like Benny Hill outtakes! Unfortunately, it's not all just LSD lunacy. There are **LONG, DULL** stretches involving the bride's playboy uncle

(Jacques Bergerac), some nymphet who keeps telephoning and interrupting the action, and Tommy's Mother Goose Complex, which keeps turning him into a wet rag whenever he gets into a clinch with his frustrated wife...How's the acting? I couldn't find any, for the life of me! It's played with all the restraint and subtlety of the old Dean Martin Show. It tries so damned hard to be hip, and fails so miserably in almost every department. Hard to believe someone actually created this film, and even more difficult to fathom the fact someone financed it! It's sorta fun in a purely stoopid way (in particular, the acid antics), but nowhere near as bizarre as the storyline makes it sound. —Steve Puchalski

VOYAGE INTO SPACE (1970). Remember the good ol' days of children's television when Japanese super heroes ruled the small screen? In the late seventies, these sixties sci-fiers dominated the US airwaves as every kid in America rushed home to catch Ultra-Man, Spectre-Man and Space Giants. By my standards, the best had to be *The Johnny Socko Robot Show*. A fun filled series with espionage, adventure and of course, giant monsters clobbering cities...**VOYAGE** is a feature length version of the Johnny Socko Show that comprises the first and last episodes of the series, with three others edited together and released onto TV by AIP in 1970. The word fantastic doesn't fit this film...First we're introduced to Unicorn Agent U3 and young Johnny Socko aboard a cruise ship. U3 is trying to solve a rash of ship wrecks and finds the answer when a nasty tentacled sea monster named Dragalon smashes the ship, leaving U3 and Johnny to wash up on a desert island. Wouldn't you know it? The island just happens to be the secret HQ of the evil Gargoyle Gang (you know they're evil because they all have berets and sunglasses) and their meanie leader from outer space, Emperor Guillotine. U3 and Johnny find their way down to an underground section of the island where a blackmailed old scientist has invented the greatest Giant Robot of all time (which looks like King Tut) who will only obey the first person to speak into the secret wristwatch remote control. Needless to say, Johnny yells into it as the Gargoyle Gang corners them. The good old doc rigs up a booby trap, helps Johnny to escape and then blows up the base. The explosion activates the Robot and Johnny uses him to stop Dragalon's attack on Tokyo...Soon after, Guillotine is launching various monsters to destroy the world. Helping him are Botonus and Dangor the Executioner, who look like Yul Brynner painted silver and Frankenstein with a peg leg, respectively. The film is a non-stop barrage of shootings, bombings, and city stomping as Giant Robot tangles with the Nuclion (a HUGE killer bowling ball), the Gargoyle Vine, the Lagorian (a scary as hell combination dog/lizard), and my personal fave, the giant disembodied Gargoyle Eye. What a shame they didn't include the Flying Hand and the Purple Slime Monster!...**VOYAGE** is one of the best giant monster movies I've ever seen, which avoids a lot of pit falls movies of this sort have—Johnny is assertive, not obnoxious and whiny—and the hokey special effects work well and in most cases are far more believable than anything I've seen on syndicated trash like *Star Trek The Next Generation* or *Superboy*. The ending will have you crying as Giant Robot gives up his life by flying Guillotine (now a giant atomic bomb) into a meteor. The scene with Johnny giving the Robot a salute while tears pour down his cheeks is a show stopper!...Unfortunately, parental complaints led to this and countless other shows like it to be yanked from TV forever. What a pity considering the vomit kids must endure today. Even worse is all the shows that never came to this country like *Kamen-Rider*, *Ultra Seven*, *Ultraman Taro*, and countless others. Hope may not all be lost. As the narrator says at the end, "perhaps someday Giant Robot will come back, out of the sky". —Anthony Peticaro

A.K. ART KILLER (1990). The very first thing that ticked me off about this flick is that it's another Toronto-posing-as-NYC movie, which means everything seems fake. If only that was the least of this lemon's problems...The title character is some demented artist who murders homeless people, splatters 'em with paint and signs them like original artwork. The punk set loves the concept, of course, and considers the killer a creative genius working within a new art form. So far, this is a solid idea for a satire on the '90s art scene. Sort of an updated variation on *A BUCKET OF BLOOD*, focusing on the murderer's skewed vision of reality. Too bad the film never takes that direction...Instead, we meet Jason Gedrick (*IRON EAGLE*, *ROOFTOPS*, and a batch of even shittier films) as a struggling composer (who, despite the fact he's struggling, can still afford a huge loft apartment in Manhattan); his girlfriend, who's a TV reporter covering the killing spree; and his wacky buddy, Teddy. In their spare time they also headline the lamest performance art troupe I've ever endured. Gedrick soon becomes a cause celebre when he's mugged by copy cat artistes, who screw him to a picture frame and hang him in an alleyway all night, while the police consider him a suspect....If all this sounds ripe for comedy, canuck-shmuck director Graeme Campbell never capitalizes on it, instead going for psycho-on-the-prowl idiocy. And you'd have to have the I.Q. of a doorknob not to figure out who the killer is long before the cast does...A total embarrassment for everyone involved. Overwrought. Tired. And I lost track how many times I checked my watch during the film. Plus they even got the title wrong—it should've been labelled **A.K. ABSOLUTE KRAPOLA**. —Steve Puchalski

LOVEDOLLS SUPERSTARS (1986; We Got Power Films). Looking for one of the greatest music industry movies of the last decade? No, not CAN'T STOP THE MUSIC, you morons (though it's a close call)! It's this home-brewed mind-melter from David Markey—the follow-up to his even-cruder DESPERATE TEENAGE LOVEDOLLS. This time around the satire is sharper, the dialogue more riotous, its targets more pompous and deserving of a kick in the head, and the camera even stays in focus most of the time!...Just in case you missed it, the first film dealt with the ragtag formation of an all-girl band, The Lovedolls (sort of a vomit-rock Go Go's), their trip to the top of the charts, and plummet back into oblivion. As our sequel begins we learn that lead vocalist Kitty Carryall (Jennifer Schwartz) has become a boozy has-been, Alexandria (Cheeta Punkerton) is a Hollywood Boulevard whore, and Patch Kelly (Janet Housden) now leads a commune of burn-outs and has changed her name to Patch Christ. And when they decide to stage a comeback of the notorious Lovedolls, they do it the easy way—by violence, coercion and gang-knifing record company execs. This is solid broken-bottle-in-the-face satire (one of my favorite types!), incorporating great scuzzy locales and loads of abrasive subplots. There are kidnappings by religious pitchmen, an attack by a demonic Gene Simmons doll, suggestions on how to eliminate mindless fans (with a nod to Jim Jones), and even a plot to assassinate Bruce Springsteen (and ain't it about time somebody did?) during a perfect parody of Bruce's/DePalma's ultra-irritating "Dancing in the Dark" video. But the altogether freakiest moments are courtesy of Steve McDonald, who deserves a belated Oscar for his spastically wondrous performance as Rainbow, the twin brother of the Lovedoll's stinkweed ex-manager from the first flick (Remember? The girls killed him). Imagine Crispin Glover stuck in the middle of Billy Jack's Freedom School, complete with wall-to-wall Peace 'N' Love bullshit...Including a cameo by Jello Biafra and music by Redd Kross, Markey has churned out a hate-filled, drug-drenched and completely believable (yeah right) portrait of stardom. I only hope he eventually makes it a trilogy. —Steve Puchalski

CHATTERBOX (1977). A musical/comedy about a talking vagina? I'm there! And if it isn't readily apparent, this is probably one of the most ridiculous films ever financed. Plus, once the flick was made, the studio couldn't even advertise the plot. Real bright, eh? It's an unbelievable debacle from director Tom DiSimone (CONCRETE JUNGLE) which, despite a few so-numbingly-inane-it's-funny moments, wears thin pretty damned fast. Still, I can understand why John Waters considers it one of the all-time tackiest movies...70s B-movie princess Candice Rialson (HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD) stars as Penelope Pittman, a young lady who discovers she has a second voicebox when her clitoris begins making off-color criticisms of her post-coitus bedmates. Her gynecologist makes the discovery public, er, public with "Virginia, the Talking Vagina" becoming an overnight celebrity, and naive Penelope following along on a 'learning experience' into sex. My favorite moment is when Virginia gets to sing the National Anthem at a ball game, in addition to going on a take-off of The Dating Game, being crowned Queen of the Rose Parade, and even putting an impression of Virginia in cement in front of Grauman's Chinese Theatre. The double entendres are cheap, plentiful and (unfortunately) quite leaden, and the most painful moment is when Penny and Virginia are signed to make a movie musical ("the first one to star a real cunt," says an exec). The Tony Orlando and Dawn Show had better production numbers, but it didn't have Candice with her dress pulled up. The only truly laughable aspect of this ultra-cheesy T&A-fest is that the filmmakers actually want to be sweet—wearing its innocence on its sleeve like a gob of dried snot...Ms. Rialson tries her best, but only makes an impression in the Garbonza Oogling Department. It's too bad, because Candice was one of my favorite screen bimbettes. I wonder what ever happened to her? Maybe she perished from terminal embarrassment after catching a screening of this clinker?...There you have it. One tasteless high concept, one often-unclothed starlet, but an utter waste of braincells. Co-starring the perennially-desperate-for-a-job Rip Taylor as a beauty parlor manager and Professor Irwin Corey as himself, this is an interminable 73 minutes. On the positive side, it's miles better than ME AND HIM, Doris Dorrie's talking-penis fiasco. —Steve Puchalski



BACK STREET JANE (1989; Scorched Earth Productions). Touting itself as a "modern film noir", Monica McFarland and Marlene Shapiro headline this b&w indie feature, as two streetwise chicks in search of easy (and not particular legal) money. Roaming throughout the low-rent sections of Denver, the duo begins with simple breaking and entering, and quickly escalate to blackmailing some slimy drug peddlers. But they might be in over their heads when they match wits with a female coke kingpin...The story is a little slight, and at 95 minutes it seems awfully padded, but director/producer/writer/cameraman/editor (I bet he also made breakfast for the crew) Ronnie Cramer keeps the proceeding uncompromising and surprisingly gritty. A bag of blow laced with arsenic provides a grim subplot, and the ending is a pisser!...Technically, the film has a clean, well-crafted look, and it's obviously not a slapped-together-in-a-weekend project. Add to that some characters you can truly admire (i.e. sexy, independent women with no scruples whatsoever). All this talent only makes it sadder that the film as a whole never ignites. Cramer could've taken an easy, trashy approach to his subject matter, or tried instead for a witty femme spin on the aged genre. He attempts to hit both bases and emerges with a wishy-washy melange that left me cold. JANE is a low budgeter more admirable for its intentions than entertaining in its outcome. —Steve Puchalski

FRANKENHOOKER (1990). Yes, I know you've ALL probably seen this one by now, but since Frank Henenlotter is swiftly becoming a modern day heir to H.G. Lewis' tin-foil crown, I figured this gross-out laughfest is certainly worth a late mention. Filmed back to back with his somewhat-disappointing BASKET CASE 2, this feature makes most of its points simply by hiring James Lorinz (who stole the show in STREET TRASH as the cocky doorman) for the lead. Lorinz stars as Jeffrey, a suburban mad scientist who matter-of-factly conducts brain experiments on his mom's kitchen table, and who puts his self-study to use when his sweetheart (Patty Mullen) is killed in a tragic lawn mower accident. He manages to save the head, and with Grey's Anatomy as a guide, plans to construct "the centerfold goddess of the century". Setting up a fully operational lab in his New Jersey garage, Jeffrey secures the needed body parts from the biggest female meat market on

the East coast: Times Square! Who's gonna miss a few hookers, right? Henenlotter once again employs *Dangerous Drugs for Cheap Laughs* (as he did in *BRAIN DAMAGE*), by having Jeffrey cook up a batch of Super Crack to lure in the whores. There's a side effect to the drug though—it tends to make people EXPLODE! One orgy later, and there's call girl chunks flying in every direction! And Jeffrey's experimentation results in a mini-skirted, piecemeal prostitute who rampages down 42nd Street in search of potential johns, squealing "Wanna date?"...Scriptwriters Henenlotter and Bob Martin cram in every opportunity for a cheap gag or blast of unrealistic gore, never settling for anything but the Extreme in Exploitation. Bravo! They toss in a muscle-bound pimp named Zorro, a fridge full of reanimated body parts, wall-to-wall bare breasts (some without bodies attached to 'em), and a twisted finale that only Henenlotter could've pulled off. None of this is scary in the least (the only truly frightening moment is seeing bloated Louise Lasser, who belongs in some mutant livestock show nowadays), and the puerile humor takes center stage with the hilarious Lorinz risking permanent typecasting as the Colin Clive clone. Co-starring Shirley Stoler and Zacherle, don't walk into it expecting anything earth-shaking—just solid sleaze that proudly lives up to its incredible title. And we can always use more of that. —Steve Puchalski

SOLARIS (1971). Finally, we have some Thinking Man's/Woman's Science Fiction (which is a blessing to some, a warning to others) from the often labyrinthine genius of the late Andrei Tarkovsky. Though not as hypnotic and gorgeous as *STALKER* (my pick as his finest work), it still captures a texture for nature and complexity of themes which are rarely attempted in celluloid science fiction. And happily, it's been recently re-issued in its full-length, subtitled, scope version...Based on Stanislaw Lem's novel, the story involves a psychologist named



Kelvin, who's assigned to check on some funny business at a space station circling the mysterious planet Solaris, which is comprised of a swirling ocean of fog and matter. He arrives to discover the living quarters are nasty, grimy and unkept; the pair of remaining residents are secretive; and the corridors echo with foreboding (not to mention dirty laundry). The characters remain solemn and passive (in a typically Russian way), even as absurd, unexplainable occurrences transpire, such as some mysterious new additions to the crew. Soon

Kelvin himself is pulled into the station's spell, and he must contend with the sudden appearance of his deceased wife, while trying to unravel who—or what—is causing these "guests" to form from the crew's subconscious desires...This a dense tale, as visionary as it is methodical. Steeped not in cold technology and gimmicks, but Loss and Longing for the past. Who hasn't dreamt of reliving lost days? Or seeing the person we once loved, one final time? Heavy emotions to be found in a science fiction film, and though Tarkovsky is never subtle in his intentions, the entire enterprise is forged in personal pain...Be prepared to slow down your rhythms a bit though. Several long, pretentious sequences may tax your patience (such as a tour along an urban highway), but there's beauty to be found in every shot. And though the special effects aren't going to give ILM any worries, they're effective in a highly stylized way...*SOLARIS* is an uncompromising masterpiece of despair and romance, poured within the trappings of science fiction. —Steve Puchalski

JUBILEE (1977; Mystic Fire Video). To say that director Derek Jarman has a knack for the bizarre would be an understatement. And just when you think you might've pegged down his eccentricities, he rolls in a different direction. From *CARAVAGGIO* and *SEBASTIAN*, to *THE LAST OF ENGLAND*—his thoroughly original indie efforts are always beautifully mounted and frustratingly fascinating. *JUBILEE* is his foray into the world of punk, captured during its brief burnt-out glory, which mixes bad craziness, bad music and sledgehammer agitprop with a touch of fantasy. The film begins briefly as a period piece, with Queen Elizabeth I and her head wizard (Richard O'Brien) whisked into the present by Ariel, a black-eyed angel in a bodystocking, in order to show her England's fate. And what an eyeful she's in for! The country's in chaos and we eavesdrop on a ragtag community of punked-out anarchists, derelicts and lesbians. The eclectic community consists of Jenny Runacre as the aptly-named Bod, Toyah Wilcox as the buzz-cut butch Mad, Little Nell as Crabs, and Adam Ant as a heavily-rouged newcomer who wants to be a rock star. These are folks who realize No Future is better than the future being handed them by society, and for most of the flick we just take in their everyday activities, like kicking the shit out of some fuckhead for cheap thrills and resisting the rising tide of bullshit. Jarman sneaks in some jabs at the music industry with a McLaren-esque promoter/manipulator, but mostly the scattershot plot is simply a melange of senseless destruction, dead-end lives, and moments of surprising lyricism (especially in Jarman's near-poetic dialogue). Thoroughly pretentious and shockingly lurid, with enough blunt sexuality and nudity to give it a sleazy veneer. And even if it's not always coherent (or even successful), the movie is pocked with schizophrenic pleasures. It's also one of the rare attempts to locate the rebellious pulse of that period (before it sold out or went DOA). —Steve Puchalski

I DRINK YOUR BLOOD (1971). From the sound of the plot, this could've been a combination of *THE WALTONS* and *TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE*. No such luck. It's a Jerry Gross debacle, which was always paired with the even more inane *I EAT YOUR SKIN* (and I always joked they should've triple-billed it with *I WANNA HOLD YOUR HAND*), featuring evil flower children and some quick dollops of gore. You see, there were two types of movies featuring hippies in the late-'60s/early-'70s. The ones where they were misunderstood rebels, and the others, where they represented the End of Civilization as we know it. The band of dippy hippies in this film fall into the second category (in addition to being dumb as dung), while following the belief that "Satan was an acidhead" and indulging in human sacrifices. Stopping in a hick town, they pick up some meat pies at a local sloop joint, then break into a house and begin terrorizing the lovable ol' farmer—eventually dosing him with L.S.D. (which is referred to as "that L stuff that makes you crazy"). And in a fit of revenge, the farmer's pudgy grandkid injects their pies with rabid dog's blood. Chomp chomp. Before long these annoying shits are turning into drooling, sweaty, homicidal longhairs, with Burma Shave oozing from their mouths...Sounds good? Sorta. Particularly during the last half-hour of carnage. It would've been better with

a faster pace and a more in-your-face direction from David Durston though. Plus the script is so lame you spend more time oogling the maxi-sideburns and kitschy fashions than listening to their inanities. You can't fault it's sleaziness level though, since it includes such tasteful elements as a gang-bang, an immolation, plus a pregnant woman who contracts rabies and kills herself by plunging a stake into her belly. Unfortunately, the thoroughly conservative elements win out in the end....Sad to witness so much potential exploitation, with such middling results. —Steve Puchalski

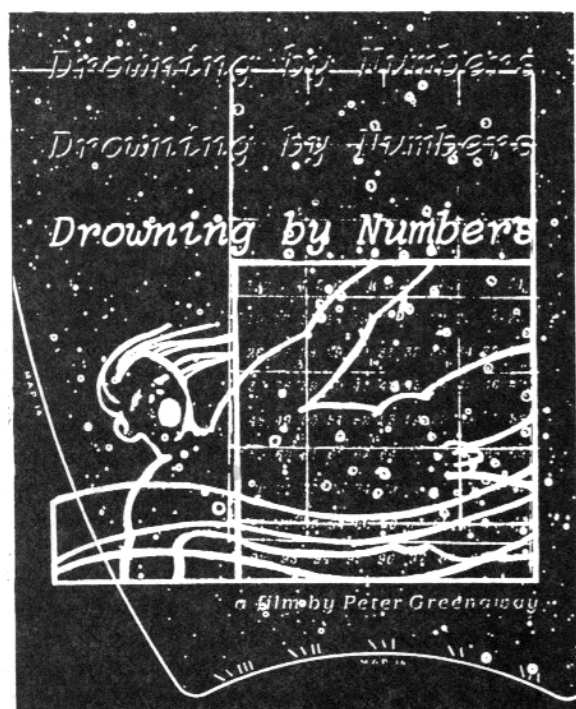
ANGEL MISSION (1987). The Hong Kong export is foremost a showcase for the martial arts talents of Japanese-born Yukari Oshima—a pretty, petite heroine who can rip her way through a pack of dirtbags faster than solid food through a wino. The lack of any subtitles would usually be a major drawback, but in this case, who needs 'em? This is a chopsocky flick, not Edward Albee! And within five minutes this kung fu caper is in high gear, with oriental stuntmen leaping about or getting swiss-cheesed by automatic weapons...Oshima plays a karate instructor who gets involved with underworld villains, and though the preponderance of dialogue threatens to keep the movie grounded, its quick explosions of mayhem keep it watchable on a braindead level. There are stolen gems, occidental hit men, drug lords packing heroin in hollowed-out melons, and so many double crosses I couldn't tell the good guys from the bad. Plus one great gag, where an explosive briefcase is super-glued to a goon's hand. Basically, it's all pretty standard stuff, but Yukari is a distinctive pleasure. Charming, sweet, yet a dynamo of swirling limbs when she's pissed off at some jerk. Too bad she doesn't have more screen time, because I love women who aren't afraid to kick ass on-screen, and it makes me wonder why U.S. stars like Sally Field can't stick a little kung fu into their projects. It certainly couldn't hurt...ANGEL MISSION is adequate, mindless fun, and it's probably even better if you could understand what the fuck the plot was. —Steve Puchalski

LOBSTER MAN FROM MARS (1990). From the outset this flick looks like a total piece of shit, but director Stanley Sheff manages to find some inspired laughs out of his obvious love for '50s drive-in trash. Tony Curtis clocks in a couple hours work as a studio exec who needs a massive money-loser in order to get out of IRS trouble, so he hires a geeky novice to make the worst movie ever made. In other words, LOBSTER MAN FROM MARS. Luckily for the viewer, most of the running time is filled by this hilarious homage to AIP monsteramas and sci-fiascos (instead of the lame PRODUCERS-ripoff bookending story), which features a half-man/half-crustacean running around the countryside in a cardboard Ming the Merciless cape. Aided by his assistant Mondo (a gorilla suit with a plastic space helmet, a la ROBOT MONSTER), the Lobster Man's double-edged plan is to [1] steal the earth's atmosphere and [2] invade a girl's dormitory (hey, the guy might be from Mars, but he's not an idiot!). Sheff pays tribute to a number of film favorites, including REPO MAN, ALIEN, TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE, and 5000 FINGERS OF DR. T, and he grabs a supporting cast of likable pros, including pretty Deborah Foreman (VALLEY GIRL), Patrick Macnee, and Billy Barty as a turbaned psychic. Moments are so cut-rate and Corman-esque it's almost frightening—from the home-sewn costumes and clichéd dialogue, right down to the strings on the Space Bat...The entire thing is very foolish, but it kept a smile on my face (not to mention a beer in my hand) throughout. —Steve Puchalski

THE SWILL AND THE SWELL

Yes, there's even more crap to watch out for...First off, JACOB'S LADDER is one of the biggest wads of manipulative tripe I've put up with in awhile. Sure it's slick, but it's also overblown and unoriginal. Basically just a rehash of OCCURANCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE. By the end you'll be making raspberries at the screen from its sentimental claptrap...HARDWARE was another slick one that suckered the rubes in (including myself), before unveiling itself to be a completely braindead SF tale. If there's a killer robot inside my apartment, I'd prefer to keep my distance, unlike the boneheaded characters of this flick, who just keep streaming in to meet their bloody demises...Was there any other reason to see MERIDIAN, other than oogling Sherilyn Fenn's hooters? As reasons go, they're pretty damned good ones, but the film is still crap...Dennis Hopper's THE HOT SPOT was a minor disappointment. Oh, it wasn't terrible or anything. In fact, for a film starring Don Johnson, it was suprisingly unannoying. But I was hoping for more than just an efficient (not to mention overlong) film noir (or should I say film bore?) from The Hop. At least his earlier directorial effort, BACKTRACK (now with a new title, CATCH FIRE) is finally hitting to video late this summer. Only one problem: Hopper took the Alan Smith route after Vestron buttheads hacked his black comedy epic from nearly three hours to 90+ minutes. Hopper also stars as a hit man, Jodie Foster is a witness, and it features (or least, "featured" at one time) many of Hop's pals. Will the original cut ever appear? That's what we've always wondered about EASY RIDER, and its long-legendary three-hour-plus version...Fuck the Academy Award committee, for ignoring Jennifer Jason Leigh's wrenching performance in the gritty LAST EXIT TO BROOKLYN. When it comes to prostitutes, I guess they'd rather have the white-washed Julia Roberts variety (in fact, if you want a good laugh, read the back of the PRETTY WOMAN video box. Roberts is referred to as a "carefree young woman", because the Disney dickheads didn't want to shock America by admitting she's a whore)...EDWARD SCISSORHANDS is quite simply, a wonderful little fantasy. Not consistent, but so original in concept and brilliant in execution that I forgave its lapses. And Johnny Depp is great. Sure, people make fun of the guy for 21 JUMP STREET, but nowadays he works with John Waters and Tim Burton, and shacks up with Winona Ryder—which I think makes him the coolest (if not the luckiest) guy in show biz...And on the porno take-off department, look for EDWARD PENISHANDS at a video sleazemart near you...GRIM PRAIRIE TALES gets a slight recommendation, if for no other reason than being a little different (a horror anthology all within an Old West context) and having a sense of self-humor (primarily thanks to James Earl Jones' loco-weed thesping)...SHOCK 'EM DEAD is a complete waste of time, especially if you grab it hoping for a hot helping of Traci Lords (who's prominently featured on the video cover, but doesn't actually star—or even disrobe). It's a Faustian rock 'n' roll horror film, with a nerdy fry cook turning into a heavy metal monster. A couple vaguely interesting ideas get lost amidst the hack filmmaking. Ho hum...What the hell happened to Melvin Van Peebles? Was he abducted by space aliens and replaced by a no-talent clone? I couldn't believe that the man who brought us SWEET SWEETBACK could come up with a film as totally lame as IDENTITY CRISIS. A body-switched comedy that's so unfunny (not to mention offensive) that I couldn't even finish watching it...At least his kid Mario has redeemed himself with NEW JACK CITY, the best action flick of 1991 (so far). Despite its heavy-handed anti-drug message (at least they're talkin' about Crack), the film is primarily a kickass undercover cops vs. drug kingpin tale. Ice-T burns the screen and Wesley Snipes is the baddest motherfucker since Tony Montana. Even Judd Nelson isn't half bad (though you keep wondering what he's doing there). And as for Mario, his direction is so good I hope he never

shows his shitty smirk on-screen again...THE PUNISHER and I COME IN PEACE were both better than I'd expected. Mindless action and nonstop stupidity, but what else do you expect from a Dolph Lundgren movie? Surprisingly, the big guy is racking up a nice little filmography of efficient B-movies. They ain't gonna be adapting Moliere for him in the foreseeable future, but he's got a good eye for what works within his extremely limited range...HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD II is of note for only two reasons. 1) Though it steals its entire plot from Dante & Arkush's incredible original (still one of my all-time schlock faves), it still doesn't get a single laugh. And 2) it marks the "legitimate" acting debut of porn-starlet Ginger Lynn, who's sucked more dick than Merv Griffin...The award for most unbearably pretentious video release of 1990 goes to Atom Egoyan's SPEAKING PARTS. A Canadian sack o' artsy shit that should never have been allowed across the border. Some people are suckered in by its slick, oh-so-cool attitude. But it's dead at the core, with the most annoying cast of GQ poseurs since "Thirtysomething"...SILENCE OF THE LAMBS is quite possibly the best exploitation film ever made! Director Demme and cinematographer Tak Fujimoto take everything they learned from early drive-in epics like CAGED HEAT and DEATH RACE 2000, and put it to perfect use in a major outlet. A great book, and a rollercoaster movie to match. Hopkins has never been better (though he's gotta watch his film choices—it'll take a while to wash the bad taste of DESPERATE HOURS outta my system), and Jodie Foster just keeps getting better. It's good to have a female lead whose intelligence goes hand in hand with her beauty...Considering all the things going against it from its conception, THE DOORS turned out to be a pretty interesting movie. It never digs under the surface or makes any new revelations about the Gizzard King, but Val Kilmer proves he can actually act. Lotsa fiction keeps slowing down the story, but Stone pulls off some spectacular sequences too. A thumb's up goes to it's decidedly pro-hallucinogen standpoint too (which in this day, is a virtual miracle for a studio project)...Well, it's about fucking time Peter Greenaway's DROWNING BY NUMBERS was released in the states. Filmed back in '87, it's another gorgeous, obsessive, cold and amoral look at sex and death from Greenaway. On the surface it focuses on an eccentric coroner, three generations of women, and the fate which awaits each of their husbands. What keeps you glued to the screen though, is the astonishing wealth of verbal and visual gamesmanship. Not in league with Greenaway's best, but still superb...FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND is the biggest, most expensive, most star-packed, and WORST movie Roger Corman's ever made! What the hell was the guy thinking when he was cranking out the crock? The script has more stitch marks than the title monster, the acting is laughable, the time travel nonsense is botched, and John Hurt's Knight Rider-esque talking car only pissed me off further. If all your future films are gonna be this good, go back to producing, Rog, please?...THE SUITORS is a real oddity. An Iranian black comedy, set in NYC, with Farsi dialogue. And it's well worth digging up, just for the hilariously sicko beginning. A group of Iranian friends are celebrating a friend's marriage, so they decide to slaughter a sheep in their bathtub. The noise (not to mention the blood dripping into the next apartment) brings the cops to the place, who mistake the partygoers for terrorists, and end up gunning down the happy husband. Wow! The rest of the film follows the young widow as she deals with NYC eccentricities and her dead husband's three best friends, all of whom try to woo her. It's all very strange and endearing...POPCORN is just another chunk of mainstream swill trying to latch onto the Freddy audience. A bunch of teens are menaced at a horror movie marathon by a disfigured, deranged killer who—Yeah, you know the



rest by heart already. It's a severely tired formula. A couple good laughs are found during the monster movie take-offs the crowd is watching, but even cute Jill Schoelen (THE STEPFATHER) can't save it from the recycle bin...Tom Savini's remake of NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD (though I've heard Romero shot much of it himself) is certainly nothing special, but isn't a disaster either. My only question: Why the hell did they stick so close to the original? The same characters, the same situation, the same jokes, and (would you believe) less gore. The only time it gets interesting is when it veers from the original (which is almost never). A good cast, but a stupid idea...On the other hand, THE DEAD NEXT DOOR has a fraction of LIVING DEAD's budget, an obvious love of Romero's trilogy, and all the bad taste you could hope for. It gleefully takes the zombie genre into absurdist offshoots, while pouring on gore and guffaws. Utterly crude, but also surprisingly fresh...John Woo's THE KILLER is finally getting the U.S. press it deserves. If you haven't seen it, listen up: This is the most action-packed, bullet-riddled movie in the last decade! And when half the population of Hong Kong isn't getting slaughtered by automatic weapons in some of the most stunningly edited sequences since Walter Hill's glory days, the high camp dramatics will keep you in stitches (a hit man accidentally blinds a pretty young nightclub singer, and then falls in love with her). The most fun I've had at the flicks in months!...No, HENRY AND JUNE is not a sequel to HENRY, PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER, though it would've been a lot more fun if it had been. Even Jean-Claude Van Damme can't save it from trading into pretentious bore territory. Films conveying artistic creativity are tough to pull off, and director Kaufman manages to get the look right as well as some erotic set pieces, but not much else. Sure, its sexuality got it an NC-17 rating, but it's synthetic, through and through...I have no great love for Madonna, but TRUTH OR DARE is a perversely fascinating, wholly manipulative, ego-trip. Most mega-stars prefer Wonder Bread self-portraits, but this flick gives us all the blemishes, boredom and on-stage masturbation. Plus, I like the idea of impressionable pre-teens out in Peoria watching two guys french kiss in close-up...Guess who's still churning out garbage? Staten Island's own Andy Milligan! And his latest, THE WEIRDO, is one of his worst! It makes his other turgid works look positively spritely in comparison. A retarded guy falls for a doe-eyed chick and then kills everyone who gets on his nerves. The only frightening moment? The promise of a sequel!...And one final recommendation as the deadline approaches: SONNY BOY. I missed this twisted tale when it played NYC theatres, and I'm still kicking myself. Who knew that the ugly broad in the ads was actually David Carradine, who spends the entire film in drag?! A combination of TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE and RAISING ARIZONA---in which a baby is kidnapped by a family of lunatics (Paul Smith, Brad Dourif, and matriarch Carradine) and brought up like a wild animal. I spent half the film stunned by its stylized edge, the other half roaring at its crazed melodramatics. Sick, violent and arty, all at the same time! A four-star fave!..Well, that's all the space for now...



MUSIC VIDEOS

CUT TIME (1990; Coyote Pictures, 822 Grand Street, Jersey City, NJ 07304). Filmed in May 1990 by Sarah Bleakley, this is an extraordinary glimpse into the Lower East Side underground music scene. Featuring stark and beautiful b&w photography, this tightly edited half-hour film is fascinating, even if you're not a fan of cutting edge music. Because it works as well as a documentary as it does an extended music video...A barrage of diverse bands are paraded past the camera, and the viewer is given a chance to sample each group's music, mixed with brief interviews and a little East Village streetwise seasoning. We meet folksy Kirk Kelly, King Missile (who try their best to sound Deep, and fail brilliantly), False Prophets, Carry Nation, Woodpecker, The Gamma Rays, and Hypnolovewheel. Twisted anarchy reigns for The Reverb Motherfuckers, who describe living conditions when you're an Alphabet City musician; and the caustic attitude of Two Minutes Hate is evident in their on-and-off stage events...The camerawork by Muzzy Horn and editing by Paul Devlin give the film kickass energy, while never overshadowing the subjects, and the entire production is loaded with more savvy than any high budget, studio-backed music video. Most importantly, the bands don't come off like punk idiots—for the most part, they're intelligent, talented folks just trying to survive in NYC and play their music...Thank goodness Sarah Bleakley was there to capture the scene, before it disappears. And to do it so impeccably. —Steve Puchalski

TOM JONES IN LAS VEGAS (1981; USA Video). How could anyone pass up this eye-glazing dose of nostalgia? Yes, it's Tom Fucking Jones! Live from Caesar's Palace, circa 1980, accompanied by a full horn section, back-up singers and an audience crammed with 60-year-old groupies (I half expected them to start tossing their Depends up on stage to him). Once again proving he's got the hardest working pelvis in show biz, Tom moves across the stage with all the grace of a gazelle with a brain tumor, sweats like a chunk of rancid pork, keeps his shirt unpleasantly unbuttoned down to his navel, and has a hair perm modelled on Bert Convy's. As one fellow viewer keenly observed, "he's a 6' 2" turd with a half-octave range". Tom struts through all his hits, including "Delilah", "She's a Lady", "The Green Green Grass of Home", "What's New, Pussycat?" and (of course) "It's Not Unusual". And since all this nonsense was captured at the height of the disco era (shudder), Tom also decimates Kool and the Gang's "Ladies' Night". Every song is more diseased than the next—and the only thing more banal? Tom's "witty" patter between songs, which makes you want to nail his dick to a rock, just to watch him squeal. And I swear, at some angles the guy looks like Andre the giant's little brother. Nevertheless, I love this horrible video, from its day-glow box to its masochistic medley. Truly, there's only one Tom Jones (thank god). —Steve Puchalski

BIBLE OF SKIN (1990; Tale Napkin Productions, Attn: Mark Hejnar, 7044 No. Greenvew, Apt. 3-N, Chicago, IL 60626). Here's a severely brain-damaged outpouring of video age anarchy, featuring the "music" of Pile of Cows. And I should warn you right off the bat, it should only be experienced by the most hardcore acidhead. This tripped-out miasma from Mark Hejnar juxtaposes images of corpses, holocaust footage, dog fucking, self-castration, vomit, blood, and more, then pours on the hyper-intense colors and solarization. And before you know it, the swirling colors and throbbing drone take on a raw, hypnotic effect. It's nominally sectioned into songs such as "Dreams of Amputation", "Kill-House" and "Christian Hole", and though the box promises "Eternal Happiness! Eternal Bliss!", they could've added "Eternal migraine!" too. It's thoroughly cynical, razor-edged and sardonic, and unfortunately on a one-note level, without much humor about itself. I'll tell you one thing though: They ain't gonna be playing this on The Family Channel in our lifetime...Jarring to the ear, harsh on the eye, and psychologically unsafe for your brain. In other words, a considerable success, and Mark Hejnar has a good career ahead of him as an underground video director—if he doesn't become a serial killer first. —Steve Puchalski

INDUSTRIAL SYMPHONY #1 (1990). Filmed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in November '89, this is the most fascinatingly pretentious concert video of last year. Not that you'd ever in your life expect something from David Lynch to be overblown and pretentious, right? Try to imagine a musical version of ERASERHEAD, and when your mind stops spinning like you've been sniffing turpentine, sit back and let this hour-long videotaped stage show ooze over you...The set consists of junked autos, factory piping, cupie dolls hanging from the rafters, and naked women climbing on girders, and amidst all this debris Michael J. Anderson (Mr. Dancing Dwarf from TWIN PEAKS) saws a log, drags a skateboard with a light bulb on it, and recites a monologue accompanied by clarinet and masturbating woman. And in between the little performance art pieces, Julie Cruise floats down from the ceiling in a taffeta ball gown to sing tunes from her album...The music by Angelo Badalamenti and Lynch is wonderful—songs of faded hopes and lost love—and Cruise's ethereal voice brings a heart-wrenching depth to it all. The look of the production is spectacular at times, but Lynch has hit that dicey Weirdness-Cuz-I-Can-Get-Away-With-It level of

HERE IS THE ONLY WAY THAT YOU WILL EVER HAVE ETERNAL LIFE!

BIBLE OF SKIN



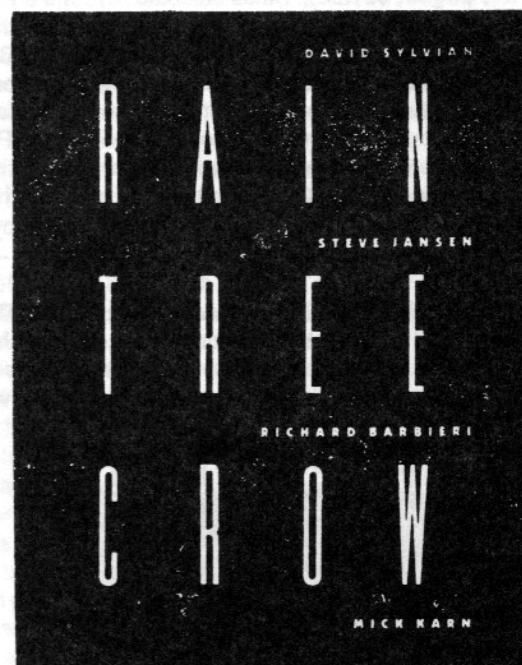
filmmaking which verges on annoying. I guess that comes with the territory when you find yourself ass-deep in popular acclaim. It could be a lot worse though—the guy could be making *GHOST PART 2*. —Steve Puchalski

MUSIC

BONGWATER "The Power of Pussy" (Shimmy Disc, Jaf 1187, ny ny 10116) Beautiful. Need I say more? Sure I do...Some people (you know who you are) will whine that Bongwater's gotten too damned mellow with their latest sound excursion. Indeed, it's almost lyrical at times, though it never lacks the twisted sense of humor we've come to love and choke on our beer at. Lead vocalist Ann Magnuson romps through tunes like "Obscene and Pornographic Art" and "Nick Cave Dolls", and "Folk Song" is a wild finale—a mock-radical ode to rebellion (and the only song in recent memory to suggest the idea of dropping Acid and seeing BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ). Two additional highlights include a glorious reworking of "Bedazzled" (from the Peter Cook/Dudley Moore classic) and a genuinely sweet cover of "Kisses Sweeter than Wine", aided by Peter Stampfel's banjo...Very cool. —Steve Puchalski

RUTLES HIGHWAY REVISITED [a tribute to The Rutles] (Shimmy Disc, Jaf 1187, ny ny 10116) The songwriting genius of Neal Innes combines with some of the best independent bands of the '90s to bring us an entire album of Rutles covers! What warped mortal could pass up such a completely demented concept? (And if you don't know who The Rutles are, it's YOUR fucking loss, you morons!). The mix fluctuates between nicely executed clone-versions of the original pseudo-hits (but with a decidedly rougher edge, of course) to flat-out gonzo regurgitations. I tend to side with the later. A few of the many highlights include The Pussywillows' hopped-up "Hold My Hand" and "Bongo, Bass and Bob's "Number One"; The Tinklers' "Blue Suede Schubert"; and Bongwater's genuinely euphoric "Love Life". Most wondrous though is Shonen Knife's unforgettable "Goose Step Mama". Undying thanks to Shimmy Disc for keeping the music of these legendary Brit twits alive and relevant. —Steve Puchalski

RAIN TREE CROW (Virgin Records). In the late '70s, David Sylvian and his British glam-rock group Japan were poised for big-time stardom. Already idolized in the U.K. and their namesake country, with hits like "The Art of Parties" and "Gentlemen Take Polaroids", the powers that then pushed runners-up Duran Duran into the megabucks category wanted Sylvian and Group. Badly. But in 1983, Japan pulled the plug. With increasing introspective tracks like "Ghosts", Sylvian was obviously not going to tour the world crooning crap like "Hungry Like The Wolf" and he took a long walk. A walk that led to collaborations with such jazz and experimental players as Jon Hassel, Robert Fripp, Bill Nelson, Sakamoto, and Holger Czukay. His amazing records in the '80s were a breath of fresh air, blending ambient textures, strong musical interplay, and thoughtful lyrics, delivered in his trademark dark whisper. Well, after 10 years, Sylvian has (temporarily) reformed his old band, and under the new moniker "Rain Tree Crow", Sylvian again delivers a hypnotic set of dense electronic jazz-pop, this time adding a loose improvised sound. Also in the mix are some truly wacked sampled sounds, loops, and bassist extraordinaire Mick Karn's signature swoops and backwards-sounding fretless slides. There are some beautiful pop songs here though, "Blackwater" and "Pocket Full of Change" ranking alongside his most accessible and melodic ever. So although "Rain Tree Crow" won't exactly set the pop world on fire (unlike, say, Vanilla Ice...), its headphone-friendly pleasures are sure to make a few discerning listeners smile. —Tavis Riker



THE GODFATHERS "The Godfathers" (Epic Records) The third album from The Godfathers just happens to be one of my favorites so far this year. I have to admit I wasn't hot for this group's first couple endeavors, but this one chews some serious holes in the ozone. '60s influences abound, mixed with dark depressing '90s lyrics about getting fucked over in life and love. Top tunes like "Drag Me Down", "King of Misery" and "How Does it Feel" are all solid and cynical. Even a comparatively 'up' number, like "Something About You" has a wonderfully mean spirited edge. These are the types of song that'd best be appreciated by people who've been kicked in the teeth by an ex-girl/boyfriend (hey, that applies to a whole lot of us jokers, I guess)...Good new music from a major label? Believe it! I play it every chance I get. (In addition, Lisa, Julie and Hanna write up some of the coolest press releases I've seen in a while). —Steve Puchalski

THOSE FABULOUS '70s (The 70s Preservation Society, P.O.Box 2170, Knoxville, Iowa 50197. Cass/\$14.99, CD/\$18.99, plus \$4 s&h) Do you ever wish that you had a time machine that could take you back to Spencer's Gifts, circa 1975? For me, the 70s are defined by wandering around that store in the flickering strobe light, looking at the black-light posters, the "stripping" cocktail glasses, the copies of Pass-Out, and the dirty bachelor party items. I don't remember ever buying anything there, but I learned a lot about zodiac signs, sexual positions and chattering teeth...Well, the tape "Those Fabulous 70s" makes me feel like I'm back at the mall, in a way no K-Tel album could do. It's got a cover with a guy in a leisure suit, surrounded by lava lamps, MAD magazine, stop signs and those twisted Pepsi bottles, and it's got the sounds of that forgotten decade. You feel as if it should come in eight-track because of the mega-hits it contains. Hits such as "Rhinstone Cowboy", "Brandy", "Billy, Don't Be a Hero", "Afternoon Delight" and "Brother Louie". It's even got "Saturday Night". There's nothing like a dose of the Bay City Rollers to make you remember dancing in the junior high gym in your sister's platform shoes. One listen to Wild Cherry's "Play That Funky Music" and you'll know that Vanilla Ice is just a slushy on a hot day compared to the original...The flipside of the 70s, the schmaltz quota, is represented by such selections as "(You're) Having My Baby", Helen Reddy's "I am Woman", "Seasons in the Sun" and Sammy Davis Jr. doing "Candy Man". (Brings a tear to me eye)...You can order "Those Fabulous 70s" through the 70s Preservation Society. And you can't borrow mine, my brother—you've got to buy your own. —Mary Schafer

UN-FILM "13" and WRITHING EUPHORIA "Rubber" (New Flesh Tapes, 2837 N.W. 66th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73116) First off, I'm listening to this 90 minute double cassette, and within 3 minutes I've got a headache. But strangely enough, I'm also cranking the volume. Because even if I'm not sure what the fuck it is, or if I even like this shit, I know I want it LOUD! Un-Film is industrial noise taken to its Nth degree. A mind-blur of intricate sonic distortion. And though I think I encountered some lyrics amidst the bombardment, don't quote me on that. Writhing Euphoria is on the same level, weaving sounds and music into a macrame of mental instability. Pulling sound bites (old trailers, BLUE VELVET, news reports, porno flicks, et cetera), and looping them over and over and over until the room begins to spin (or maybe that was from the 40 ounce I chugged). Together, they represent the audio distillation of a frontal lobotomy, but without those unsightly doctor bills. Ouch! —Steve Puchalski

JOHNNY LEGEND "House of Frankenstein" (Sympathy for the Record Industry; 4901 Virginia Ave., Long Beach CA 90805). How can you NOT love any single that's pressed on putrid green vinyl? And when it comes equipped with two classics, "House of Frankenstein" and "(Theme from) 2000 Maniacs", it's all the better, because I'll actually listen to it instead of just nailing it up on my bedroom wall. What a wild package! You get great XNO cover art, a bitchin' Legend pic on the back, and two kickin' tunes to keep the neighbors complaining for hours on end (especially if you play them over and over and over...). Peter Gordon wails on the sax for the rockin' "Frankenstein", and Hershell Gordon Lewis' B-side is revved up to a rockabilly high...Find it. Get it. Treasure it. —Steve Puchalski

BOOKS

SONGS OF THE DOOMED: MORE NOTES ON THE DEATH OF THE AMERICAN DREAM by Hunter S. Thompson (Summit Books; 317 pages; \$21.95). Those staccato rhythms are back at work, as the good Doctor returns to the literary world with his third volume of the Gonzo Papers. Far and away more entertaining than his previous GENERATION OF SWINE, this one mixes random pieces from the past with rambling anecdotes from present day Woody Creek. All the usual topics are covered: Politics, American society, drugs, and how Hunter once stuffed a lipsticked pig's head down someone's toilet bowl for a savage joke. Highlights include a blistering account of the Pulitzer divorce trial, and one of the most brilliantly freeform descriptions of a mescaline rush ever put on paper. There's even a segment from Thompson's long-promised novel THE RUM DIARY—which is a double surprise, because it (1) doesn't rely on drugs and insanity, and (2) reads like the best goddamned fiction around. Of course, this volume climaxes with a few well-chosen words about his recent arrest, when he was ripped from Owl Farm by spineless Fourth Amendment destroyers and nearly turned into slammer meat by some publicity-hungry bimbo...This is Thompson's most consistent, enjoyable outpouring in a long time. Once again proving to his detractors that he's still one of the primo journalists around. Required reading. —Steve Puchalski

THE SECRET LIFE OF A SATANIST: THE AUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY OF ANTON LaVEY by Blanche Barton (Feral House; 262 pages; \$19.95). Anton Szandor LaVey. Is he a charlatan? A genius? A huckster extraordinaire? Well, since this is an "authorized" bio of the High Priest of the Church of Satan, expect lots of reverence, very little criticism, and page upon page of unforgettable episodes. There's no question that LaVey led a wild life. Beginning with an alienated childhood and swift obsession with the seamier side of life, LaVey tried



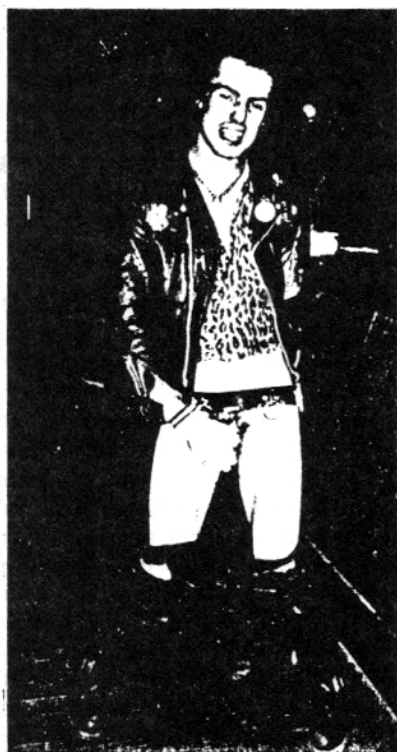
his hand at lion taming, hypnotism and swami tricks on the carnal circuit; got to hang out at murder scenes as a Police photographer; had a two-week fling with Marilyn Monroe, back when she was stripping to pay the rent at the "Beer, Babes and Broadway Revue"; and embraced Satanism in the '50s after becoming sickened by the hypocrisy and greed of organized religion. It all came to a peak on Walpurgisnacht 1966, when he shaved his head and began the soon-infamous Church of Satan—quickly becoming a media star with his lurid photo spreads and rituals earning him the title of The Black Pope...The book is broken into two different levels. The first half relies more on anecdotes from his life, and the second gives us long doses of his philosophy. I tend to prefer his tales: From a Navy burial performed by Satanists, and Jayne Mansfield's tendency toward exhibitionism, to his exasperation at the "druggie poseur" followers of Aleister Crowley and his embrace of Rabelais' hedonistic motto "Do What Thou Wilt" (which he claims was usurped by Crowley's crew). The most fascinating aspect of LaVey's religion is the fact he breaks away from the patently inane Satanic stereotype most people would expect, instead pushing sexual freedom and the hardcore pursuit of pleasure, with his services providing "cathartic blasphemies against Christianity" and utilize occult symbols to focus emotional power and cause a "change in situations or events in accordance with one's will". You don't buy into it, you say? Well, LaVey backs it up with more level-headed proof than the Catholic Church has for all their holy nonsense (and just look at how many people straightjacket their lives around that wonderful piece of fiction, The Bible)...This is a loving tribute to LaVey, with Barton fawning over him and his overwhelming

charisma (but then again, what would you expect from a writer whose previous contributions were to a mag titled The Cloven Hoof?). The writing style is strictly routine, but Anton's tales keep the book lively, though it slows down during the more theoretical chapters, such as LaVey's extended opinions on psychic vampirism, favorite Satanic flicks, architectural angles, and the gullibility of hippies (which he refers to as "psychedelic vermin"). I'm still a tad skeptical about his magical claims, but whether it's simple coincidence or darker forces at work, it's probably safer to take the guy's word on it...If you're further interested in LaVey's own words, you can pick up his **THE SATANIC WITCH** (Feral House; 274 pages; \$9.95), a treatise on witches with LaVey shattering the storybook cliché by focusing on the art of manipulation and seduction. LaVey doesn't bullshit, and openly explains (with surprising logic) how women can get what they want by using their satanic charms. But don't expect a lurid tract, because it's almost textbook-like in tone, with LaVey breaking it all down to a near-science, on how to make people do your bidding by using sex and societal stereotypes to your advantage. In addition, there are pointers on mind games, eye contact, fetishistic attunement, and finally the casting of spells. The guy can also be quite critical about the validity of drug-induced

"revelations" and women who like being a witch for the trendiness of it all. Primarily, it's a cold and calculating outlook, which takes the Game of Love and turns it into a con game. LaVey certainly has thought it all out, and though you might not agree with a few of his insights, he certainly puts up one hell of an argument. Willing women can learn a lot from this book; and men may well see at least one female from their past hiding in its pages. —Steve Puchalski

MEDIUM COOL: THE MOVIES OF THE 1960s by Ethan Mordden (Knopf; 301 pages; \$24.95). How can you NOT respect a book on '60s motion pictures that has the cool sense to plaster a pic of Warren Beatty in MICKEY ONE on the back cover? Covering one of my favorite eras of filmmaking (when experimentation was in), author Mordden examines the changes in society and how the cinema world mirrored (and in some cases stoked) them; plus how revisionist U.S. politics led to similarly independent minded movies. Sounds heavy and intellectual? Not entirely, because Mordden also adds profiles of up-and-coming actors like Redford, Beatty and Newman (when they were working outside the establishment, instead of running it); dredges up criticism of classics and not-so-classics from the period (from PSYCHO and LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS, to POINT BLANK and KITTEN WITH A WHIP); and isn't afraid to make the occasional wise-assed remark. Though I disagree vehemently with a few of his quick assessments (like his put-down of the entire biker genre), Mordden also spends time on interesting sidelines, such as the elimination of creaky critics like Brosley Crowther, the death of the musical, and the emergence of the underground/Warhol scene. Overall, a well-detailed (albeit slightly dry) analysis that hits plenty of bases within its sprawling subject matter. —Steve Puchalski

SNAKE EYES (Fantagraphics Books; 86 pages; \$7.95). We can always use a fresh forum for new (and even not-so-new) underground artists, especially when it's this thoroughly cool. Labelling itself "Post-Popeye Picto-Fiction", SNAKE EYES is a b&w collection of tales by some of the best illustrators in the East Village and its environs. So obviously most of the subject matter involves booze, death and surviving in urban hell. Though a mixed bag, there's something here for anyone with half a brain and a full bladder of beer. Highlights include Glenn Head's "NYC Subway Journal"; Julie Doucet's all-too-well-understood "Alcoholic Romance"; Krystine Kryttre's jazzy "Horny Blowzit"; and Bob Sikoryak's wonderfully demented "Action Camus". Included is an illustrated tale by Charles Bukowski entitled "A Man", and let's not forget their Apolyp-epic "Pixie Meat", which gives new meaning to the term Mind-Blown. It's a fine compilation, giving artists a chance to work within their own unique format and despite their even-more unique neuroses...This is their premiere issue. I can only hope they keep 'em rolling! —Steve Puchalski



After the Kingfish show, Sid shares his warmth.

12 DAYS ON THE ROAD: THE SEX PISTOLS AND AMERICA by Noel E. Monk and Jimmy Guterman (William Morris and Co.; 239 pages). Monk had the dubious job of being The Sex Pistols' road manager during their notorious U.S. tour, so he not only knows the facts, but survived despite them. And this is more a diary of their grotty escapades than some dried-out, third-hand analysis. It begins with a quick overview of the Pistols' rise to infamy, Malcolm McLaren's packaging of 'em, and how they went through record labels faster than Karen Carpenter went through Ex-Lax. But when it came to their American debut, instead of hitting all the major markets and topping it off with a gig on SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE, McLaren dragged his disgusting crew through the sheer hell of the Deep South for a tour that'll never be equalled. Monk tosses in plenty of digs about McLaren's unleashed ego, staid record execs (such as the Warner Brothers reps, who got upset when their hair was spiked by Johnny and the boys, using butter), dimwitted Atlanta cops (isn't that a redundant term?), and an unauthorized film crew who kept following them. But the most insane anecdotes revolve around Sid Vicious (I guess that's not a big surprise, eh?), because when he wasn't disappearing into the night in search of a fix, Sid was either drooling, fighting, practicing self-mutilation, or refusing to bathe. And the image of Vicious both vomiting and shiting diarrhea onto a groupie in the middle of a blowjob is difficult to forget. Including some wild photos to prove it's not just a work of brain-burnt fiction, this is a brisk, very cool history lesson...The only adverse criticism I have is with the simple fact it's a \$20 mass-market hardcover about The Sex Pistols. Shit, the commercialization of the punk ethos is now complete. —Steve Puchalski

COLD DOG SOUP by Stephen Dobyns (Viking Press; 1985; 231 pgs). This is a novel about New York City. It begins in a health club and ends on the subway, and in-between it concerns a yuppie named Latchmer and a Haitian cab driver named Jean-Claude trying to sell a dead dog in the middle of the night. They also try to sell his water bowl, his squeaky mouse, his red rubber ball, and his old collar and leash. Theirs is a night journey, a stygian quest and, as always, the ostensible goal is of secondary importance to the trip, to the unfolding of self that accompanies each surmounted obstacle on the dark streets and back alleys of the soul. The whole thing begins in Latchmer's memory, on his way to have dinner with a one handed woman he met there — the "canoe-like" Sarah Hughes. He goes to her apartment, where he is forced to make conversation with Sarah's aged mother, who shares the apartment with Sarah and their likewise aged dog, Jasper. After a little small talk Latchmer tells a nasty dog story (the first of several horrible dog stories he tells throughout the book, stories so disgusting and inappropriate they almost get him and Jean-Claude killed) that upsets the mother. Later, in the kitchen, Sarah grabs his crotch with her false hand and whispers "I want to be your suck-oven." During dinner, Jasper the dog starts running around the apartment, breaking things, until he drops dead. Latchmer decides to give him mouth-to-mouth. You know, one of those dates. Latchmer ends up on the street with a garbage bag full of dead dog (and dog accoutrements) having promised to bury same over in Jersey. He hails a cab and the driver, Jean-Claude, persuades him to try selling the dog instead. "We sell the dog, we sell the dog's dishes, we sell the rubber mouse. This is New York. People will buy anything," he says. Well, almost anything. Jean-Claude has lots of contacts who take the proposition seriously but, well...At the research laboratory the control phase of their research is over ("We want live dogs now."). The furrier likes Jasper's nice red coat, but his fur is too loose ("Believe

me, no one will want the pelt...even for a rug."). He looks too tough for the Chinese restaurant, though they do make a partial offer ("Fifteen dollars," said Mama-San. "You take ears like this and fry them in a little butter. They are very special."). And they can't even unload him at Jojo's One-Stop Sex Shop ("For cryin' out loud, Jojo," said a man in the third row, "we just did a whole mess of dead dogs in February. We're sick to death of dead dogs."). There's just no pleasing some people...They have little luck, although the other stuff, the mouse, the rubber ball, et cetera, do find buyers. Eventually Jean-Claude, who drives like Stevie Wonder, wrecks the cab and urges Latchmer to run. "The police won't like you carrying Jasper in a black bag. They won't understand." So they are separated for a while. Latchmer tries to bury Jasper in Central Park but the police stop him and steal the shovel he bought. You know, one of those nights...This is a very busy short novel and I've really only glanced over the surface here. I'm not gonna get into the ending for the usual reasons...Aside from the plot, there is a complex flashback structure, dealing with the events that surrounded the death of Latchmer's grandfather. At the end of the book, a very satisfactory resolution ties this together with Jasper, and we even begin to understand why Latchmer tells those appalling stories all the time. Latchmer is a fully realized character with a rich inner life and this novel is whole in a way very few are. When you finish reading, you'll feel like you spent that night running around the city peddling a dead dog and drinking bad rum with a Haitian cab driver...Word is that a movie has been made from COLD DOG SOUP, but that the producers were the sort of sub-mammalian morons who say things like "Yeah, it's just like AFTER HOURS only we gotta make it funnier...". But it's only been released in England so far and I'm inclined to give it the benefit of the doubt, certainly there is a great movie somewhere in this book, we'll just have to wait for an American release to discover whether these guys found it or not. —Chris Doherty

THE BARE FACTS by Craig Hosoda (P.O. Box 3255, Santa Clara CA 95055-3255; 225 pages; \$9.95 + \$1.50 postage) You'll have a hard time believing this book. Or that its author put so much loving time and effort into this guide to nude scenes in the movies—delivering a one-of-a-kind, anal retentive reference book for sleaze-mongers to yank their maggot to. From full frontal nudity to a one-frame glimpse of bare tit, Hosoda doesn't just give us a simple alphabetical listing. He also includes a brief description of the scene, a 0-to-3 rating, and

even the exact time during the film when the flesh is flashed. There are no photos (shucks!), but the listings range from Kathleen Turner and Diane Lane to Rosanna Arquette and Julie Brown, and of course, some tease queens like Sybil Danning and Monique Gabrielle receive nearly full pages. Hosoda even stretches the boundaries to include women like Rita Coolidge and Yoko Ono (what, no Moms Mabley?). Oh yeah. I almost forgot to mention that males are also included in their own separate (much thinner) section, which I have no urge to wade through...I've gotta commend compiler Hosoda on his vision and stamina, and though many films are overlooked, I'm sure he's probably slobbering in front of his VCR, correcting those lapses, even as I type. —Steve Puchalski



A YOUTH IN BABYLON: CONFESSIONS OF A TRASH FILM KING by David F. Friedman with Don DeNevi (Prometheus Books; 355 pgs). This biography of David Friedman, the "Emperor of the Exploitation Film", proves he led a life as lurid and entertaining as the films he produced and publicized. And if you're fascinated by the early era of exploitation movies, this is a must, because it's crammed with anecdotes about the glorious days of roadshow hucksterism. When Friedman could roll into any dinkville burg with some crappy two-bit flick in the trunk of his car (anything from his notorious MOM AND DAD, to the mondo-esque KARAMOJA, to Ingmar Bergman's risqué MONIKA), promote it like the second coming of Jesus Christ, pack the theatre for a week, and escape with a wad of cash big enough to choke Roger Ebert. Friedman tells a great tale—from dealings with corrupt drive-in owners and tent preachers, to how he used to repackage 30-year-old, 40-minute-long Bible dreck as multi-million-dollar epics. It's a lengthy book, crammed with details, and readers might nod off at some of his less enthralling reminiscences. Still, it's a dozen times better than Roger Corman's recent all-too-sketchy bio, which had nothing new to say and should've been three

times the length...Friedman gives us a raucous self-portrait of this Master of the Quick Buck Movie, who worked by only one rule: Give the people what they want. Unfortunately, this is only the first half of his story! Yep, it's true Scam Artist tradition, just as the book starts getting to the best stuff (his dealings with Herschell Gordon Lewis and the taboo-busting '60s), it screeches to a halt and announces that a follow-up will cover that particular era. A rip-off? Nope, because when David F. Friedman is at the helm, it's simply referred to as old-fashioned showmanship. —Steve Puchalski

VIDEO TRASH AND TREASURES II by L.A. Morse (Harper and Collins Publishers, Suite 2900, Hazelton Lanes, 55 Avenue Rd., Toronto, Ontario, CANADA M5R 3L2). L.A. Morse delves back into his video-soaked brainpan and emerges with a second full volume of reviews. And this collection is even better than his first—tackling more offbeat fare and finding films usually unnoticed by other guides. His first book covered primarily horror and science fiction, while this time he devotes almost 400 pages to sleaze, sexploitation and suspense, with the last (and best) section dredging up cult flicks such as SUGARBABY, NO SURRENDER and WITHNAIL AND I (all faves of mine too). Everything from Lobster epics to ninja slaughterfests fall between its covers, and what other guide would have the scope to encompass both Andy Sidaris' PICASSO TRIGGER and Stephen Frears' THE HIT? (well, SHOCK CINEMA would, of course—hey, maybe that's why I like this book so damned much!). Morse's latest outpouring is entertaining and informative, with plenty of humor to keep it a notch above the usual reference book lullabys. Well worth checking out. —Steve Puchalski

INVASION OF THE SCREAM QUEENS by Donald Farmer and Bill George (Mondo Press, 154 Big Spring Cir., Cookeville TN 38501; 96 pages; \$11.95) Spotlighting horror starlets from Caroline Munro to Linnea Quigley, this is a long loving look at the sleazy misses of the

silver screen (though the "silver" has usually turned to a "soiled grey" in the dives where their flicks play). Over half the pages are devoted to black and white photos (most of the cheesecake variety), and that's the primary reason most bishop-whackers will be pickin' it up—so they don't wear out their VCR's freeze frame button. On a verbal level, the most interesting portions are interviews with Camille Keaton (I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE), Mary Woronov, and Rainbeaux Smith, not to mention plenty of funny anecdotes about the "joys" of lowlife filmmaking. And of course, the David DeCoteau herd of Quigley, Michelle Bauer and Brinke Stevens are given hefty plugs (much more than their acting limitations deserve) and sizable photo spreads...Its trashy, lurid edge tends to overshadow the fact that there's some good articles sifted throughout, but that's what sells most of 'em, methinks. —Steve Puchalski

SMALL PRESS PUBLICATIONS

STINK (27 Hillcrest Street, Staten Island, NY 10308. \$14 for 12 issues). Man, this is one of the funniest fanzines around! And the dudes behind this newsletter (Nick the Yak, Simon Tick, Count Fear, and Richy Demento) are the types you wanna pour back a few cases of beer with. They deliver no nonsense film reviews (including "STINK's Worst Films of All Time" column), a quick-and-dirty layout featuring fun ad slicks, and (most importantly) a great sense of gutter-grown humor. And with sections entitled "Mainstream Hogwash" and "More News and Shit", how can you go wrong? But what sets STINK apart from many other mags is its first-hand coverage of the midnight movie scene (what's left of it, that is), plus peep shows, strip joints, and other atrocious attractions that make NYC so much goddamned fun to sleaze about in. Very cool stuff. —Steve Puchalski

PRETTY POISON (c/o Gary Gittings, 307 Bloxwich Road, Leamore, Walsall, West Midlands. WS2 7BD. ENGLAND) - PSYCHOTIC REACTION (c/o Spencer Hickman, 50 Wingfield Road, Great Barr, Birmingham, B42 2QD. ENGLAND) I'm lumping both of these knockout newsletters into one big review because (1) they're both from England, (2) they cover the same schlock cinema beat, and (3) because they're both highly recommended for similar reasons. The two mags work beautifully as companion pieces to each other, and each editor has an avowed aversion to bullshit and a ripping sense of humor to match the material. Gary's PRETTY POISON has been on hiatus for awhile, but it's back in all its scuzzy glory, reviewing a wide selection of films—from Hollywood bowel movements like LOOSE CANNONS and THE ROOKIE to gutter classics like SONNY BOY and LAST HOUSE ON DEAD END STREET. And I love how he mixes in record reviews (Leary's "Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out") and kitschy books (the incomparable ELVIS WORLD, which I'd also considered reviewing!). Spencer's PSYCHOTIC REACTION stays more imbedded in the horror 'n' gore genre, with reviews of such diverse dementia as VENUS IN FURS, SCUMBUSTERS and MEET THE FEEBLES, not to mention some mind-bogglingly idiotic fare (like LINNEA QUIGLEY'S HORROR WORKOUT). Get 'em both! —Steve Puchalski

WEIRD CITY (c/o Dave Szurek, 1116 East First Street, Apt. 2, Aberdeen, WA 98520-2802. \$1 a piece, or free in trade for your own fanzine). For years Dave Szurek has been charting a course through the world of small-press publications—his reviews and lengthy rambles appearing in numerous 'zines. Now he's at the helm of his own newsletter. Cranked out on a junkyard typewriter, and retaining Szurek's fabled stream-of-consciousness flow. A wide array of horror and drive-in style films are reviewed (unfortunately, I disagree with many of his opinions), but what I enjoyed most were the gonzo-esque essays on his own life, such as his teeth-gnashing adventures at the welfare office. Readers not familiar with Dave's style (or his novel-lengthed hand-written letters) might find this 'zine difficult to digest, but I found it a crude but entertaining read, filled with information, humor and a welcome touch of personal warmth. —Steve Puchalski

EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA (P.O. Box 5367, Kingwood, TX 77325. Single copies: \$3. Four issues: \$10). Craig Ledbetter has been raving for years about the joys of European horror cinema (primarily in the pages of his own HI-TECH TERROR). Now he's at the helm of a digest-sized magazine devoted entirely to them. And boy, does he revel in the obscurities! Lucio Fulci's ONE ON TOP OF THE OTHER, Jesus Franco's DER RUFF DER BLONDEN GOTTIN, Umberto Lenzi's SYNDICATE SADISTS—the list of completely unknown titles goes on ad infinitum. Impeccably designed, filled with obscure overseas slicks, and with an impressive list of international contributors, this is a worthy reference guide for those wanting to immerse themselves in the sprawling genre. But since my own personal interests lie elsewhere, I found the whole thing a bit dry and heavy-handed at times. Packed with info, and heartily recommended to those moviegoers already converted. —Steve Puchalski

DRACULINA (P.O. Box 115, Moro, IL 62067. Single issue: \$3.75. 4 issue subscription: \$14). The publisher/editor of this unique mag, Hugh Gallagher, doesn't attempt to hide its raison d'être—primarily, Hot Babes in Horror Cinema, accompanied by loads of b&w pix. And as always, the latest edition features plenty of bared breasts and female flesh to keep readers glued to the pages (and the pages glued together). Not to mention some welcome articles on the world of independent exploitation. Number 11 features pieces on modern day Scream Queens, an interview with director/scriptwriter Kenneth J. Hall, and a lengthy look (by Hugh himself) on the making of GORGASM. But far and away, my favorite article is an interview with character actor Stuart Lancaster (FASTER PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL!)....There's something a bit sleazy about the whole package and its voyeuristic tendencies, but the magazine is well written and winningly unapologetic about its attitude. —Steve Puchalski

FATAL VISIONS (c/o Michael Helms, P.O. Box 133, Northcote, VIC, 3070, AUSTRALIA) Don't let its packaging look fool you. This mag has may have the slick look of a pro-zine, but its heart resides permanently in the darker niches of world cinema. That's why I enjoy it so damned much. Issue #9 includes fascinating interviews with the likes of Alexandro Jodorowsky, John Waters and John Wayne Gacy, plus Jack Stevenson (PANDEMONIUM) continues his misadventures in Europe. The warped world of Hong Kong moviemaking is also extensively covered, dozens of genre films are reviewed, and it gets pretty fucking frustrating to see some of the wild flicks that make it to Australia (and NOT to the U.S. shores). Exceptionally written, beautifully designed, and thoroughly engrossing from cover to cover. They don't get much better. —Steve Puchalski

RAVE SENSATION (Dan Snoko, P.O. Box 23673, Washington, D.C. 20026-3673. 2 Issues for \$1). This little newsletter is absolutely essential for any fan of martial arts movies. The kickass wonders of Hong Kong cinema have recently come to light with the U.S. release of *THE KILLER*, and editor Dan Snoko was far ahead of the pack, churning out his enthusiastic criticism for these action-packed adventures long before it became fashionable. The entire gamut of stars is covered—from kingpin Jackie Chan to no-necked deadbeat Steven Seagal, as well as all the latest kung fu video releases (and more importantly, where to obtain them). It's great to see a publication devoted exclusively to this genre, because you certainly aren't going to find reviews for titles like *MR. VAMPIRE* and *ONE EYE-BROW PRIEST* in the New York Times. My only criticism is that it's too thin a read, but for only 50 cents, what do you want? —Steve Puchalski

BAD NEWZ (Bob Z/STOP-GRO c/o 125 E. 23rd St. #300, New York, NY 10010. \$7 for 3 Issues). This New York city-based music 'n' weirdness 'zine just keeps getting better. It's an essential read if you want to get info on new music, underground bands, or simply want to laugh your ass off at their tasteless, beer-driven sense of humor. Each issue is crammed with reviews of new music, live shows, other 'zines, plus lots of tripped out drawings and cartoons from NYC's most happily-diseased band of illustrators. Yes, there's more!—doctored photos, stories, poems, and interviews with local bands, all spastically slapped together into one demented package. Hilarious stuff, and sure to get you aghast stares on the subway. —Steve Puchalski

GRINDHOUSE (J. Adler, P.O. Box 1370, New York, NY 10156-0605; Subscriptions: \$5). The first couple issues of this rag—with its notorious (not to mention riotous) handwritten style—had me (and all my pie-eyed pals) roaring. Well, after far too long a hiatus (and a post office fuck-up which lost much of his incoming mail), Adler is back in all his wise-assed glory! Hey, he even found a typewriter to make it easier on the eyes (though I'll sorely miss its old scrawl). Crude, rude reviews of crapola like *M 3-D*, *TERMINAL ISLAND* and *GUYANA*, *CULT OF THE DAMNED*, plus lovely personal touches (like when "some black bitch with no teeth gave me a hand job for five bucks in the basement of the Cine"). Wonderfully rancid! —Steve Puchalski

Lastly, congratulations to Michael Gingold for hitting his 100th issue of his monthly newsletter **SCAREPHANALIA** (P.O. Box 489, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156-0489). Subscriptions are only \$7.50 for a year's worth of reviews on all the current horror releases.

RANDOM PLUGS

In the mood to liven up your living quarters with some incredible psychedelic artwork? Drop a line to (or even better, stop by) the Psychedelic Solution at 33 West 8th Street, 2nd Floor, New York NY 10011. Their color catalogue is only \$3, and contains more mind-warping artwork for sale than you can imagine—including Robt. Williams, H.R.Giger, Mark Mothersbaugh, The SubGenius Foundation, and loads of searing rock 'n' roll repros. Man, if I had the available cash, I'd plaster every square inch of my apartment with their posters.

And on the convention circuit: The Baltimore Horror and Fantasy Film Society is back with *FANEX 5* and a line-up of guests that includes Robert Wise, John Agar and Yvette Vickers. I attended last year's festivities, and even though there's something inherently dweeby about these things (maybe it's the high percentage of overweight shut-ins who attend), I had quite a good time pressing flesh with the other rag editors, and going to the awards ceremony shit-faced. The date is August 10 & 11, 1991, and more info can be obtained by writing *FANEX*, P.O.Box 6220, Baltimore, MD 21206.

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[EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS: continued] the raggedy niches, while trying my best not to wake up in the morning with a gutter pressed against my cheek...Taking up space in the East Village, while subsisting off the kielbasa & eggs at the Kiev, pierogies at Lescho's, Stromboli's pizza, and enough coffee to eat a ragged hole in the remains of my stomach lining...Plus spending much of my time at Kim's Video on St. Marks and 2nd Avenue—which has the coolest staff of crazed employees, plus the best selection of art, cult and schlock videos in town. Of course, since I'm presently a manager there and do much of the video purchasing, I guess I'm a tad biased...Through my dimly-lit memory I can recall a Screw Magazine party which climaxed as everyone crowded around the TV to watch animal/human beastiality videos...The first time I ever tried Midnight Dragon ale (which was so abominable we quickly renamed it Midnight Express ale, because it tastes like a Turkish prison)...Downing shots of tequila at the Clit Club—with a dyke slideshow flashed on the walls as the entire dancefloor undulates to Dee-Lite...Experiencing the joys of White Castle at four in the morning, pie-eyed and hungry for anything—even steam-cooked cheeseburgers with the consistency of paper pulp (but very tasty pulp, need I add?)...Sneaking past the cops to get a gander at the giant balloons on Thanksgiving Eve, close enough to see Kermit the Frog sniffing Ronald McDonald's ass. These NYC flatfoots will believe anything ("Excuse me, officer. We lost our dog. Could we go look for him?"), so they let us past the barricades. And with a few well-directed slashes from my knife, I could've destroyed the expectations of parade-watchers across the country. But instead of spending the holiday at Rikers, I decided to spend it enjoying a "typical" Missouri Thanksgiving dinner of chili, purple potatoes, a small ocean of Budweiser, a home-made pie which looked like some kind of failed chemistry experiment, and Alexandro Jodorowsky's THE HOLY MOUNTAIN. Not exactly what the Pilgrims imagined, methinks...More fun? Well, one of the major events of the summer season is Wildgirl's Go-Go-Rama at Coney Island, with 40 shimmying, shaking gals strutting their stuff just off the boardwalk. But this isn't your normal flesh pageant for middle aged businessmen with newspapers on their laps. This is a non-pro event, where any young woman can sign up and try their hand bumping and grinding at center stage. Therein holds half the fascination. Because unlike the bored junkie strippers off Times Square who run the gauntlet of Japanese businessmen, these women are more like the typical girl next door, who suddenly strips down to her undies and dances on the tabletop after a couple highballs. A chance for the exhibitionist in each of them to take over—and it's obvious they love every moment of it. Therein lies the other half of the show's appeal. Some of the young ladies make their own costumes, and other simply slip into something more comfortable, like black leather and garters. And the bleachers are a savage sight (though not as savage as the mens' room at the bar next door—consisting of an unpainted room, a trough, and a No Pest Strip with seven months worth of dead insects stuck to it), packed shoulder to shoulder with friends, family and assorted degenerates. And they certainly got what they came for. One gal sports a Rainbeaux Smith/runaway-waif look and Jodie Foster specs. Two cavewomen do a Wilma and Betty act. Another rides her stick-pony Broomtail. And I'll wager The Pleasure Chest had a sudden run on leather-studded undies for this proud event. Much of the male attention went to Ilona though, who walked away with the unofficial prize for Most Creative (not to mention Hottest) Wardrobe—from kitchen strainers covering her breasts to a transparent little ensemble cut from a shower curtain. And Biz/Liz easily had the coolest moves on stage, while sporting the finest "fuck you all" pout since Traci Lords. But it's Wildgirl who runs the show, with dark glasses, a silver jacket, and platform heels that'd give a nosebleed to any normal lass. Yes, it's a four-star display of feminine pulchritude, from ballerinas to leather princesses, all dancing before the nostalgic backdrop of old

carny sideshow posters. The entire event is nothing but sleazy, teasy fun (for both spectators and participants), without one iota of redeeming social value. And that's what makes it so damned entertaining...Next we move onto a different type of pageant. The Patsy Cline Look-alike Contest at a West Village establishment called The Cowgirl Hall of Fame. Talk about a theme-oriented bar! There are antler light fixtures, little cow lights strung across the bar, cowskin bar stools, and a prized collection of barbed wire on display. I half expected to see the corpse of Randolph Scott mounted in the mens' room like a prized bass. And if the Texas drawls begin to grate at your nerves, just grab another Lone Star and listen to the seemingly-endless line of Patsy Cline classics. And in typical West Village fashion, who else could possibly win the contest but a female impersonator? A six-foot tall guy in gold stretch pants, beehive wig and stop-sign-red lipstick. Sure, the audience got a laugh out of the idea of him winning first prize and parading about with a dozen yellow roses, but there's something downright sad about a Patsy Clone who, before going on stage, has to reach down their blouse and rearrange their breasts, which had both shifted to one side like a bad Picasso painting. I'll bet Patsy's spinning like a dervish in her grave, even as I type. And after that night, I learned not to even try figuring out the West Village anymore...But no other event could equal the horror of returning to the old home turf—yes, Syracuse—for a whirlwind roadtrip into detox-land. The reason? To celebrate the reopening of our favorite college bar, Hungry Charley's, which had recently reopened under old management (after some peabrains turned it into a high-priced yuppie-fuck brewpub, and failed miserably at it...heh heh). It was all back. The heavily gouged tabletops, indigestible cheddar fries, a barrage of Grateful Dead tunes, and (most importantly) those shockingly-cheap pitchers of flat beer and watery sangria. On the way, we stopped in Pennsylvania Dutch country for a hefty breakfast of scrapple (Just what the stomach lining demands in the morning: A slab of greasy pork bi-products. By the way, does anyone out there know exactly how they make scrapple? I always figured they drove the stuff in via tanker trucks, and pumped it into the greasy spoons, like lumpy heating oil. Liquid pork residue ready to be fried into blocks and sold to unwary tourists. But I digress...), with my black leather wardrobe receiving a decidedly lukewarm reception from Shroudsville's in-bred denizens. But hours later we hit Syracuse and immediately stocked our hotel room with assorted alcoholic horrors, including some evil-tasting Windex-colored liqueur named Hutique, which came in a ceramic bottle shaped like a Hawaiian hut and was probably brewed from the shaved flesh of dead Polynesians. Not to mention a seemingly-endless line of pitchers. The memories of this dipsomaniacal field trip are hazy, though I vaguely recall getting hassled by the cops—with our handy video cameras saving us from Taser burns, no doubt. And I was told by reliable sources that the next morning they'd never seen me a lovelier shade of green. Ahh, the joys of a Jagermeister hangover...Well, this editorial is at an end. "And it's about time," I'm sure you're thinking. But hell, if you can't ramble incoherently in your own magazine, where can you? And what's in store for the fourth edition of SHOCK CINEMA? Maybe I'll tell you the entire story behind The Death of SLIMETIME. Boy, that'll keep your mind boggled for awhile. Until then, try not to die like a dog. OK?

--swp 5/25/91


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